



POPULAR

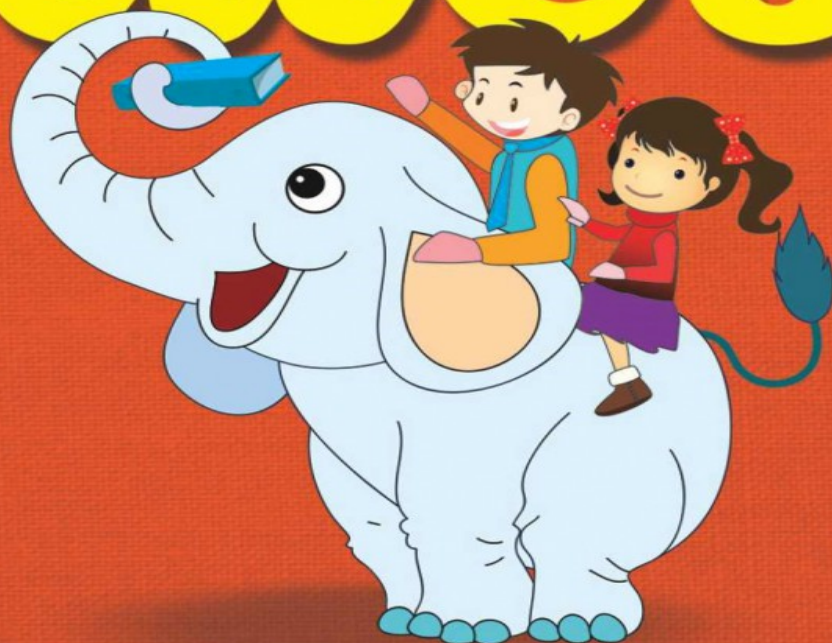


INDIAN

FAIRY



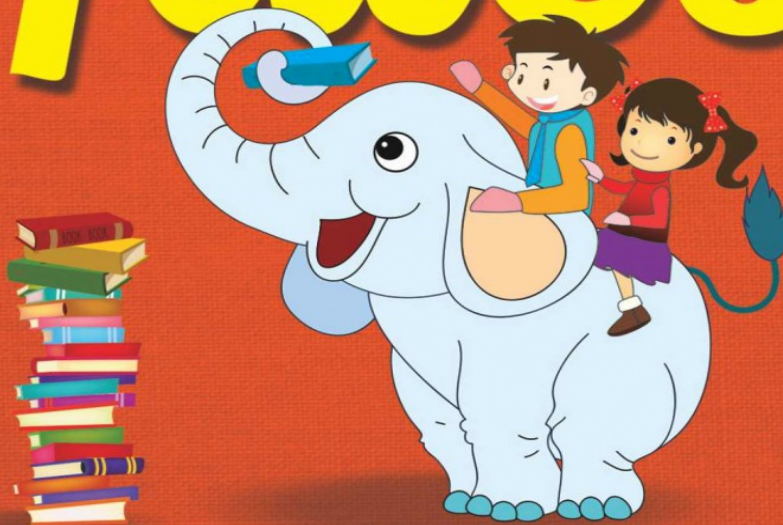
Tales



Introduction and retelling by **STUTI GUPTA**



POPULAR INDIAN FAIRY *Tales*



Introduction and retelling by **STUTI GUPTA**

POPULAR INDIAN FAIRY *Tales*

INTRODUCTION AND RETELLING BY
STUTI GUPTA



An imprint of
Srishti Publishers & Distributors

SRISHTI **P**UBLISHERS & **D**ISTRIBUTORS

A unit of AJR Publishing LLP

212A, Peacock Lane

Shahpur Jat, New Delhi — 110 049

editorial@srishtipublishers.com

First published by

Srishti Publishers & Distributors, 2020

Edition Copyright ©

Srishti Publishers & Distributors in 2020

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the Publishers.

Printed and bound in India

Why Indian Fairy Tales - An Introduction

Hello children!

I am sure you have read, heard and even watched a lot of fairy tales till now - of princesses and warriors, of magic lamps and dwarfs, evil stepmothers and charming princes, and so many other tales from the animal world. Isn't it amazing how we entertain ourselves with stories, and also learn so much from them!

If you ask me, why or how this idea of reviving the Indian fairy tales came about, I would say this very honestly - As a mother to a toddler and a storyteller in general, I always felt the need of some stories that were more Indian, that could tell little children and adults alike the best of stories from India. Since stories are the most common medium of understanding all over the world, I thought of putting together some that I personally loved.

From the rich collection of Panchatantra and the Jataka tales, I had earlier introduced stories in *101 Best Indian Fables for Children*. I have tried to pick out some really interesting tales from old Indian texts in this book. These are stories of magic and hard work, relationships and love, and above all, of a deep understanding of human lives. You will find a few questions at the end of each section, to make you stop and think on what you have read. It is a great way to imbibe the essential bits from the story, and at the same time sharpen your mind to the ways of the world.

If you love to play with words, you will also find in this book a few word games that you can enjoy. There are also some colouring pages included, where you can go crazy and sharpen your skill. If you want to share the coloured pages or share solutions to the word games, you can write to me on storytellerstuti@gmail.com. I would love to connect with you.

May you find magic wherever you look...



The Woodcutter and the Fairies





Long, long ago there lived in a small town in India a woodcutter named Subha. He and his family were all very happy together. The father went to the forest near his home to get supplies of wood every day. He sold that to his neighbours, earning quite enough to give his wife and children all that they needed. Sometimes he took his three boys with him, and every now and then, as a special treat, his two little girls were allowed to trot along beside him. The boys longed to be allowed to chop wood for themselves, and their father told them that as soon as they were old enough, he would give each of them a little axe of his own. The girls, he said, must be content with breaking off small twigs from the branches he cut down, for he did not wish them to chop their own fingers off. Doesn't this show you what a kind father he was! But you will be very sorry for him when you hear about his troubles.

Things went quite well for Subha for a long time. Each of the boys had his own little axe at last, and each of the girls had a little pair of scissors to cut off twigs. They all were very proud when they brought some wood home to their mother to use in the house. One day, however, their father told them that none of them could come with him, for he meant to go a very long way into the forest, to see if he could find better wood there than what he gets near home. The boys entreated him to take them along, but he did not agree.

"Not today," he said. "You would be too tired to go all the way, and would lose yourselves coming back alone. You must help your mother today and play with your sisters." They had to be content, for although they were fond of asking questions, they are very obedient to their parents and did all they were told without making any fuss about it.

They spent the day helping their mother at home and teaching their sisters some great things. They expected their father to return by evening, although they knew he would be a little late. They waited patiently to see what their father would have found.

They were all very anxious when darkness came, and still there was no sign of their father. Again and again their mother went to the door to look for him, expecting every moment to see him coming along the beaten path

which led to their door. Again and again she mistook the cry of some night-bird for his voice calling out to her. She finally went to bed with a heavy heart, fearing some wild beast had killed him. Sad that she would never see him again.

It is strange indeed. But let us see what the story has in store.

1. *What do you think had become of Subha?*
2. *What would you have done when he did not come back?*



When Subha started for the forest, he fully intended to come back the same evening. But as he was busy cutting down a tree, deep inside the forest, he suddenly felt someone else around him. That he was no longer alone. He looked up, and there, quite close to him, in a little clearing where the trees had been cut down by some other woodcutter, he saw four beautiful young girls. They looked like fairies in their thin summer dresses and with their long hair flowing down their backs, dancing round and round, holding each other's hands. Subha was so astonished at the sight that he let his axe fall. The noise startled the dancers, who stood still and stared at him.

The woodcutter could not say a word, but just gazed and gazed at them, till one of them said to him: "Who are you? And what are you doing so deep in the forest where we have never before seen a man?"

"I am only a poor woodcutter," he replied. "I came here to get some wood. I sell wood to give my wife and children something to eat, and some clothes to wear."

"That is a very stupid thing to do," said one of the girls. "You can't get much money that way. If you will only stay here with us, we will have your wife and children looked after... much better than you can do it yourself."

That is a tricky situation to be in. He was being offered a tempting deal.

3. *What would you have said if you had been the woodcutter?*
4. *Do you think the fairies were saying the truth? That they could do as they offered?*



Although Subha loved his wife and children dearly, he was tempted at the idea of staying back with the beautiful girls. After hesitating a little, he said, “Yes, I will stay with you, if you are quite sure all will be well with my dear ones.”

“You need not be worried about that,” said one of the girls. “We are fairies, you see, and we can do all sorts of wonderful things. It isn’t even necessary for us to go where your dear ones are. We shall just wish them everything they want, and they will get it. And the first thing to be done is to give you some food. But you must work for us in return, do you agree?”

Subha at once replied, “If my family is taken care of, I will do anything you wish.”

“Well, begin by sweeping away all the dead leaves from the clearing, and then we will all sit down and eat together.”

Subha was very glad that he had been given such a simple task. He began by cutting a branch from a tree, and he used it like a broom to sweep the floor. This clearing would now be the dining-room. Then he looked around for the food, but he could see nothing but a great big pitcher standing in the shade of a tree. So he said to one of the fairies, “Will you show me where the food is, and exactly where you would like me to set it out?”

At these questions, the fairies began to laugh, and the sound of their laughter was like the tinkling of bells.

5. *Subha had asked a simple question. Why do you think the fairies laughed at it?*

6. *What is your idea of a fairy?*



When the fairies saw how astonished Subha was at the way they laughed, it made them laugh still more, and they seized each other’s hands again and whirled round and round, laughing all the time.

Poor Subha, who was very tired and hungry, began to feel sad. He wished he had gone home instead. He bent over to pick up his axe, thinking he had been fooled by these beauties. He was just about to turn away with it, when the fairies stopped their mad whirl and cried to him to stop. So he waited, and one of them said:

“We don’t have to bother about fetching this and fetching that. You see that big pitcher. Well, we get all our food and everything else we want out of it. We just have to wish as we put our hands in, and there it is. It’s a magic pitcher. There is nothing like this in the whole wide world. You get the food you would like to have first, and then we’ll tell you what we want.”

Subha could hardly believe his ears when he heard that. He rushed towards the magic pitcher to put his hand in, wishing for the food he was used to. He loved curried rice and milk, lentils, fruit and vegetables. Just as he thought about all this food, he saw a beautiful meal spread out on the ground. Then the fairies called out, one after the other, what they wanted for food, things the woodcutter had never heard of or seen, which made him quite discontented with what he had chosen for himself.

9. What would you have wished for if you had a magic pitcher?

10. Do you think it is a good thing to be getting food without working for it or paying for it?



The next few days passed away like a dream. Subha thought he had never been so happy in his life. The fairies often went off together, leaving him alone, only coming back to the clearing when they wanted something out of the pitcher. The woodcutter got all kinds of things he fancied for himself and was quite happy. But as time passed, he began to wish he had his wife and children with him. He was not enjoying the wonderful meals without them anymore. He began to miss them terribly, and he missed his work too. It was no good cutting trees down and chopping up wood when all the food was already cooked. Sometimes he thought he would just run away and go back home when the fairies were away. But when he looked at the magic pitcher, he could not bear the thought of leaving it.

7. *Do you think Subha was a wise man, on the basis of the decision he made?*
8. *What do you think was the chief cause of his becoming unhappy, after he had been in the service of the fairies for a few days?*



Soon after, Subha could not imagine living away from his family. He lost his sleep, thinking of the wife and children he had deserted. What if they were hungry, even though he had plenty to eat! It even came into his head that he might steal the pitcher and take it home with him when the fairies were away. But he did not have the courage to do this. He was also scared that even when the beautiful girls were not in sight, they would know if he tried to go off with the pitcher. What if they decided to punish him in some terrible way!

One night he had a terrible dream and he woke up with a jolt. He saw his wife sitting in the little home he used to love, and crying bitterly. She was holding the youngest child on her knee, whilst the other four stood beside her, looking at her very, very sadly. He decided that he needed to get back home, to see that his family was alright. He got up and got ready. But at a little distance, he saw the fairies dancing in the moonlight. It began to bother him again, if he could leave them and the pitcher behind. Ultimately, he stopped himself and did not go.

The next day, however, he was so miserable that the fairies noticed it.

One of them said to him, “What is the matter? We don’t want to keep unhappy people here. If you don’t enjoy life like we do, you are free to go home.”

Subha was suddenly scared that they would really send him away. So he told them about his dream and that he was scared his dear ones were starving for want of the money he used to earn for them.

“Don’t worry about them,” was the reply from the fairies. “We will let your wife know what keeps you away. We will whisper in her ear when she is asleep, and she will be so glad to think of your happiness that she will forget her own troubles.”

11. *Would the fairies’ words comfort Subha about his wife and children?*

12. If you had been in Subha's place, what would you have said to the fairies when they made this promise?



Subha was somewhat thankful for the sympathy by the fairies. So he decided to stop with them for a little longer. He would feel restless sometimes, but on the whole, time passed pleasantly, and the pitcher was a daily delight to him.

Meanwhile, his poor wife was at her wits' end. She did not know how she could feed her dear children. The two little boys were brave, and did all they could to help. She really would have been in despair without their cooperation. When their father did not come back and all their efforts to find him were in vain, these boys set to work to help their mother. They could not cut down trees, but they could climb them and chop off small branches with their axes. They collected those and made up bundles of faggots to sell them to their neighbours. These neighbours were touched by the courage they showed, and not only paid them well for the wood, but often gave them milk and rice and other little things to help them. In time, they actually got used to being without Subha, and the little girls nearly forgot all about him. Little did they dream of the change that was to come into their lives.

13. Was it a good or a bad thing for the boys that their father did not come back?

14. Why would you say it was good, or bad?



A month had passed in the forest and Subha was becoming more selfish with each day. He waited on the fairies, did the small odd jobs they gave him, but never once thought of giving up his comfort for his family. Then he had another dream, in which he saw his wife and children in the old home with plenty of food, and very happy. That disturbed him all the more. How could they be happy without him! He felt quite determined to go and show them he was still alive.

When he woke up from sleep, he said to the fairies, “I will not stop with you any longer. I have had a good time here, but I am tired of staying away from my family.”

The fairies saw he was saying the truth, so they let him go. They were also very kind- hearted and felt they ought to pay him in some way for all that he had done for them. They discussed and talked to each other, and then one of them told him they wished to make him a present before he went away. They would give him whatever he asked for.

15. What do you think made Subha determined to go home, when he thought his wife and children could manage things without him?

16. What would you have asked for if the fairies had allowed you a wish?



This was perhaps like an opportunity had come to Subha on its own. The woodcutter heard that he could have anything, so he cried, “I will have the magic pitcher.”

You can imagine what a shock this was to the fairies! You know, of course, that fairies always keep their word. If they could not persuade Subha to choose something else, they would have to give him their beloved, their precious pitcher and would have to seek their food for themselves. They tried all they could to persuade the woodcutter to choose something else. They took him to their own secret treasure-house, in an old, old tree with a hollow trunk, even the entrance to which no mortal had ever been allowed to see. They blindfolded him before they started, so that he could never reveal the way, and one of them led him by the hand, telling him where the steps going down from the tree began. When at last the bandage was taken from his eyes, he found himself in a lofty hall with an opening in the roof through which the light came. Piled up on the floor were sparkling stones worth a great deal of gold and silver money, and on the walls hung beautiful robes. Subha was quite dazed with all that he saw, but he was only an ignorant woodcutter and did not realize the value of the jewels and clothes.

So when the fairies said to him, “Choose anything you like here and let us keep our pitcher,” he shook his head and said, “No, no, no! The pitcher! I will have the pitcher!”

One fairy after another picked up the rubies and diamonds and other precious stones and held them in the light, that the woodcutter might see how lovely they were. But when he still only shook his head, they got down the robes and tried to make him put one of them on.

“No, the pitcher! The pitcher!” he said At last, they had to give it up. They bound his eyes again and led him back to the clearing and the pitcher.

17. Would you have been tempted to give up the pitcher when you saw the jewels and the robes?

18. What made Subha so determined to have the pitcher?



Even when they were back to the clearing where they had first met, the fairies did not give up hope. They were going to try their best to keep their pitcher.

They started telling Subha why he should not have it. Why he should ask for more ‘valuable’ things. “It will break very easily,” they told him, “and then it will be no good for you or anyone else. But if you take some of the money, you can buy anything you like with it. If you take some of the jewels, you can sell them for lots of money and live happily ever after.”

“No, no, no!” cried the woodcutter. “The pitcher! The pitcher! I will have the pitcher!” “Very well then, take the pitcher,” they sadly answered, “and never let us see your face again!” So Subha took the pitcher, carrying it very very carefully, lest he should drop it and break it before he got home.

He did not think even once about what the fairies would do without the pitcher. He forgot how they had given him good food and everything he wanted. He left them either to starve or to seek food themselves.

The poor fairies watched him till he was out of sight, and then they began to weep. “He could at least have waited till we got some food out for a few days,” one of them said. “He was too selfish to think of that,” said another. “Come, let us forget all about him and go and look for some fruits.”

So they all left off crying, and went away hand in hand. Fairies do not need too much to eat. They can live on fruit and dew, and they never let anything make them sad for too long. They will not appear in this story now, but you need not be unhappy about them. You can be sure that they did

pretty well for themselves after Subha left them. They did not face any real harm from their generosity to Subha, in letting him take the pitcher.

19. Do you think the woodcutter was wrong to ask for the pitcher?

20. What would have been the best thing for Subha to ask for, if he had decided to let the fairies keep their pitcher?



Can you imagine what a surprise it was to Subha's wife and children when they saw him coming along the path leading to his home? They had long lost hope for his return, and this was nothing short of a miracle for them. He walked back alone, empty-handed. Before reaching the road to his home, he had hidden the magic pitcher in a hollow tree in the woods near his cottage. He did not want anyone else to know that he had it. He told his wife that he had lost his way in the forest, and had been afraid he would never see her or his children again, but he said nothing about the fairies. When his wife asked him how he had got food, he told her a long story about the fruits he had found, and she believed all he said. She was so sad to hear of his struggles, that she decided to make up to him.

When she called the little girls to come and help her get a nice meal ready for their father, Subha said, "Oh, don't bother about that! I've brought something back with me. I'll go and fetch it, but no one is to come with me."

Subha's wife was very disappointed at this. She loved him so much, that the thought of cooking for him had made her very happy. The children too wanted, of course, to go with their father, but he ordered them to stop where they were. He seized a big basket which the family used to store fuel for their cooking fire. He turned it upside down, tumbled all the wood in it on the floor, and went off alone to the pitcher. Very soon he was back again with his basket full of all sorts of good things, the very names of which his wife and children had no idea of.

"There!" he cried. "What do you think of that? Am I not a clever father to have found all that in the forest? Those are the 'fruits' I meant when I told your mother about them."

21. What would you have thought about this wonderful supply of food, if you had been one of the woodcutter's children?

22. *Was it a good thing for those children to have all this food without working for it? Why, or why not?*



After Subha got home, life changed completely for the family. Subha no longer went to cut wood to be sold, and the boys also stopped doing so. Every day their father fetched food for them all, and the greatest desire of each one of the family was to find out where it came from. They never could do so, for Subha managed to convince them to not follow him - by scaring them, or being angry at the kids. He also kept the magic pitcher secret from the wife, to whom he used to tell everything earlier. As a result, it began to spoil the happiness of the home. The children had no work to do, and ended up quarrelling with each other over the smallest of matters.

Their mother got sadder and sadder. She could not bear the thought that her husband was hiding something from her. At last, she decided to tell Subha that unless he told her where the food came from, she would go away from him and take her little girls with her. She really did mean to do this, but something soon happened to change everything again.

The neighbours in the wood, who had bought the fuel from the boys and helped them by giving them fruit and rice, heard of the return of their father and of the wonderful change in their lot. Now the whole family had plenty to eat every day, though none of them knew where it all came from. Subha was very fond of showing off what he could do, and sometimes asked his old friends amongst the woodcutters to come and have a meal with him. When they arrived, they would find all sorts of good things spread out on the ground and different kinds of wines in beautiful bottles.

This went on for some months. Subha got prouder and prouder of all that he was doing. He was also pretty sure that his secret would never be discovered. On the other hand, everybody tried to find it out - his friends and his family. Many even followed him secretly when he set forth into the woods, but he always managed to dodge them carefully, hiding his treasure constantly in a new place in the dead of the night.

If Subha had been content with getting food out of his pitcher and drinking pure water, all would most likely have been well with him. But that was what he could not do. Till he got this pitcher, he had never drunk

anything but water. But now, he often took too much wine. It was this which led to the misfortune of losing his beloved pitcher.

While in a state of drunkenness, he began to boast of his cleverness, telling his friends there

was nothing they wanted that he could not get for them. And one day, when he had given them a very grand feast, in which were several rare kinds of food they had asked for, he drank too much wine. So much that he no longer knew what he was saying.

This was the chance his guests had been waiting for. They began teasing him, telling him they believed he was really a wicked robber, who had stolen the food or the money to buy it. He got angry, and at last, was actually silly enough to tell them all to come with him, and he would show them he was no robber. When his wife heard this, she was half pleased to think that now at last the secret would come out of where the food came from, and half afraid that something terrible would happen. The children too were quite excited, and went with the rest of the party, who followed their father to the last hiding-place of the precious pitcher.

However, when they all got very near the place, some idea began to come into Subha's head that he was doing a very foolish thing. He stopped suddenly, turned around facing the crowd that followed him, and said he would not go a step further till they all went back to the cottage. His wife begged him to let her go with him, and the children all clamoured not to be sent back, but it was no good. They all had to head right back, the woodcutter watching them till they were out of sight.

23. Would Subha have been wise if he had told his wife about the pitcher?

24. Do you think it would have been a good or a bad thing for the secret to be found out?



When the woodcutter was quite sure that everyone was gone and nobody could see where he had hidden the pitcher, he took it out from the hole in which it lay and carried it carefully to his home. You can imagine how everybody rushed out to meet him when he came in sight. They crowded around him, and there was great danger of the pitcher being thrown to the

ground and broken. Somehow, Subha managed to get into the cottage without any accident, and then he began to take things out of the pitcher and fling them on the ground, shouting, “Am I a robber? Am I a robber? Who dared to call me a robber?”

Then, getting more and more excited, he picked up the pitcher, and holding it on his shoulder, began to dance wildly about. His wife called out to him, “Oh, take care, take care! You will drop it!” But he paid no attention to her. Suddenly, however, he began to feel giddy and fell to the ground, dropping the pitcher as he did so. It was broken to pieces, and a great cry of sorrow went up from all who saw the accident. The woodcutter himself was broken-hearted, for he knew that he had done the mischief himself. He also understood that if he had resisted the temptation to drink the wine, he would still have his treasure.

He was going to pick up the pieces to see if they could be stuck together, but to his very great surprise, he could not touch them. He heard a silvery laugh, and what sounded like children clapping their hands, and he thought he also heard the words, “Our pitcher is ours again!” Could it all have been a dream? No! For there on the ground were the fruits and cakes that had been in the pitcher, and there were his wife, his children and his friends, all looking sadly and angrily at him. One by one, the friends went away, leaving Subha with his family.

25. *If you were Subha’s wife, what would you have done when this misfortune came to her husband?*

26. *What would you have done if you had been the woodcutter?*



This is the end of the story of the magic pitcher, but it was the beginning of a new chapter in the lives of Subha and his family. They never forgot the wonder-working pitcher, and the children never got tired of hearing the story of how their father came to get it. They often wandered about in the forest, hoping that they too would meet with some wonderful adventure, but they never saw the fairies or found a magic pitcher. By slow degrees the woodcutter returned to his old ways, but he had learnt one lesson. He never again kept a secret from his wife; because he felt sure that if he had told her

the truth about the pitcher when he first came home, she would have helped him to save the precious treasure.

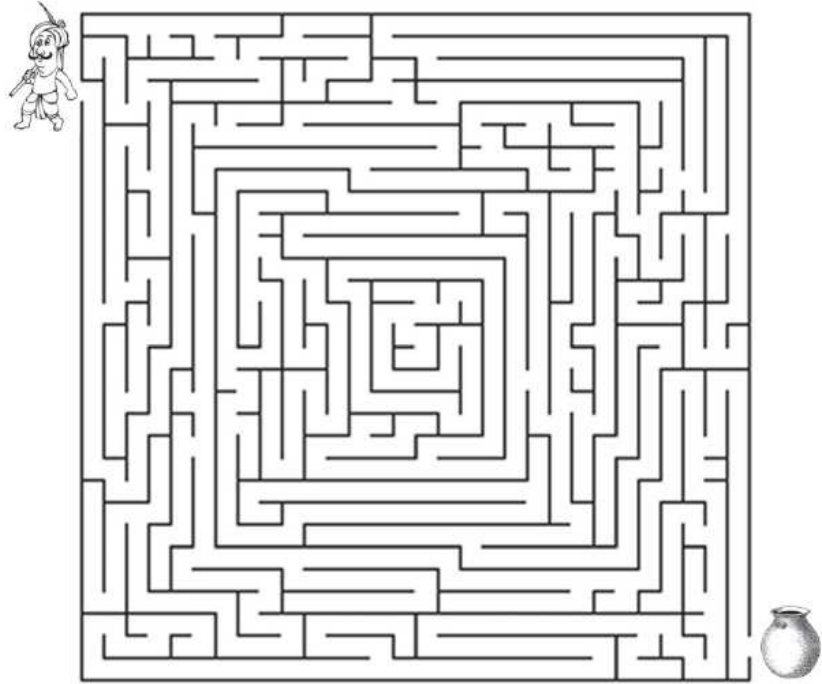
27. What lesson can be learnt from this story?

2.8 Do you think it is easier for a boy or a girl to keep a secret?

29. Why is it wrong to let out a secret you have been told?

30. What do you think was the chief fault in the character of Subha?

Can you help Subha get to the pitcher?



The Mystery of the Missing Treasure





Sravasti was a small place in India, bustling today with a strange excitement. People gathered together on a very hot day to stare at and talk about a stranger, who had come into the town. He looked very weary and walked with great difficulty, because his feet were sore with tramping for a long distance on the rough roads. He was a Brahmin, that is to say, a man who devoted his whole life to prayer, and had promised to give up everything for the sake of pleasing the god in whom he believed, and to care nothing for comfort, for riches, or for good food.

This Brahmin carried nothing with him but a staff to help him along, and a bowl in which to receive the offerings. He was naked, except for a cloth worn around his loins, and his long hair was all matted together, in dire need of combing and brushing. He made his way very slowly and painfully through the crowds, till he came to a shady corner. Once there, he sank down exhausted, holding out his bowl for alms from the people.

Very soon his bowl would have been full of all sorts of good things, but he made it clear that he would accept nothing to eat except rice still in the husk, and nothing to drink but pure water. He was, however, willing to take money; and when the people who wished to help him found that out, they brought him a good many silver and gold pieces. Some who had no money to spare gave him jewels and other things which could be sold for money.

1. *Can you explain why the Brahmin would only accept such food as rice in the husk and water?*
2. *Do you think it was right or wrong of the Brahmin to take money and jewels?*



As time went on, the Brahmin became very well known in Sravasti. His fame indeed spread far beyond the town, and people came from far away to consult him about all sorts of things, and he gave them good advice, for he

was a very wise man. Those who wanted him to tell them what to do, paid him for his advice. As some of them had plenty of money and were glad to help him, he soon became quite rich. He might have done a great deal of good with all this money by helping the poor and suffering, but unfortunately, he never thought of doing so. Instead of that, he got to love the money for his own sake. At night, when all those who had come to see him had gone to rest, and there was no fear of him being found out, he used to steal away into the forest, and there he dug a deep hole at the root of a great tree, to which he took all his money and jewels.

In India, everybody has a siesta, that is to say, a sleep in the middle of the day. You ask why? Well, because the heat is so great, it is difficult to keep going without this extra rest. So, although it is quite light at the time, the streets are deserted, except for the dogs that prowl about, trying to find something to eat. Now the Brahmin loved his money and other treasures so much that he skipped his siesta very often and go to the forest to enjoy the pleasure of looking at them. When he got to the tree, he would bend down, clear away the earth and leaves with which he had hidden his secret hole, take out the money and let it slip through his fingers, and hold up the jewels to the light, to watch how they gleamed and glistened. He was never so happy as when he was alone with his riches, and it was all he could do to tear himself away from them when the time came to go back to his shady corner. In fact, he was becoming selfish and a miser instead of the holy man the people of Sravasti thought he was. By the time the siesta was over, he was always back again in his place beneath the tree, holding out his bowl and looking as poor and thin as ever, so that nobody had the least idea of the truth.

3. *Why was it wrong for the Brahmin to hide away his money and jewels?*
4. *Can anyone be a miser about other things as well, along with money and jewels? Can you think of some?*



For many months, the Brahmin led this double life. Until one day, when he went as usual to his hiding-place. He could guess by the way the leaves were ruffled that someone had been there before him. Eagerly, he knelt

down, full of fear and anxiety to know what had actually happened. All his care in concealing the hole had been wasted, for it was quite empty. The poor man could not at first believe his own eyes. He rubbed them hard, thinking that this was just a nightmare. Then he dug round and round the hole, hoping that he would find something. When at last he knew the terrible truth - that there really was no sign of his money and jewels - he became almost mad with misery.

He began to run from tree to tree, peering into their roots, and when there was nothing to be seen, he rushed back again to his empty hole, to look into it once more. Then he wept and tore at his hair, stamped about and cried aloud to all the gods he believed in, making all kinds of promises, of what he would do if only they would give him back his treasures. No answer came, and he began to wonder who could have done such a terrible thing. It must, he felt sure, have been one of the people of Sravasti. He now remembered noticing a few people looking into his bowl with longing eyes, when they saw the money and precious stones in it. "What horrible, wicked people they are!" he said to himself. "I hate them. I will make them pay for how much they have hurt me." As he thought in this way, he just got angrier, until he became quite worn out with his rage.

5. *What would you have done if you had been the Brahmin when he lost his treasure?*

6. *Is it okay to be angry when someone has done you harm?*



After roaming about in the forest for a long time, the Brahmin went back to the house in Sravasti where some kind people had lent him a room, glad and proud to have such a holy man living under their roof. He felt sure they had nothing to do with the loss of his treasure, because they had given him many proofs of their goodness and honesty. Soon he was pouring out all his grief to them, and they did all they could to comfort him, telling him that he would very soon have plenty more money and jewels. They did tell the Brahmin clearly that they thought it was mean of him to hide away his riches, instead of using them to help the poor and suffering, and this added very much to his rage. At last he lost all self-control and cried, "It is not

worthwhile for me to live any longer. I will go to some holy place of pilgrimage by the banks of the river, and there I will starve myself to death.”

A place of pilgrimage is one where some great event, generally connected with religion, has taken place. Pilgrims go there to pray, in the hope of winning some special favour from god or having their wish fulfilled. The word pilgrim means a wanderer, but it has come in course of time to signify any traveller who comes from a distance to some such place. Benares in India, or Varanasi as it is now called, is a very famous place of pilgrimage, because it is on banks of the river Ganges, which the Hindus worship and love, believing that its waters can wash away their sins. Hundreds and thousands of Hindus go there every year to bathe in it, and many who know that they have not long to live, wait on its banks to die, so that after their bodies have been burnt, as is the custom with the Hindus, their ashes may be thrown into the sacred stream.

7. Can you name two other places of pilgrimage?

8. Do you know why the two places you have thought of are considered holy?



The news of the Brahmin's loss spread very quickly through Sravasti; and as is so often the case, everyone who told the story made it a little different, so that it became very difficult to know what the truth really was. There was great distress in the town, because people thought the Brahmin would go away, and they did not want him to do that. They were proud of having a man they thought so holy, living amongst them, and ashamed that he should have been robbed whilst he was with them. When they heard that he meant to starve himself to death, they were dreadfully shocked, and determined to do all they possibly could to prevent it. One after another, the chief men of Sravasti came to see him, and entreated him not to be so disheartened. They said they would all do everything they possibly could to get it back for him. Some of them thought it was very wrong of him to make such a fuss about it, and blamed him for being a miser. They told him it was foolish to care so much for what he could not take with him when he died.

One wise old man even gave him a long lecture on the wickedness of taking away the life which had been given to him by god, to prepare for that in the other world. “Put the idea of starving yourself out of your head,” he said, “and whilst we are seeking your treasure, go on as you did before you lost it. Next time you have any money and jewels, turn them to good account instead of hoarding them up.”

9. *Do you think the Brahmin was of any real use to the people of Sravasti?*

10. *In what qualities do you think the Brahmin was lacking when he made up his mind to starve himself to death?*



In spite of all that everyone said to him, the Brahmin was quite determined that he would not live any longer. He set off to the place of pilgrimage he had chosen, taking no notice of anyone he met on the way, but just marching steadily on. At first a number of people followed him, but they all went back and about their work slowly. Soon, he was quite alone. He could not help noticing a man approaching from the front. Very tall, very handsome, very dignified, this man was one whom no one could fail to admire.

He was the king of the whole country, whose name was Prasannajit. That is when the Brahmin noticed a retinue of attendants, waiting to obey his orders, walking a little behind him. Everybody in that land loved the king. Even the Brahmin. Because he took such great interest in his people and was always trying to do them good. He was known well to be a leader of the people and made sure nobody in his kingdom was sad or deprived.

He had heard all about the loss of the Brahmin's money, and was very much vexed that such a thing had happened in his land. He had also heard that the Brahmin meant to kill himself, and this distressed him more than anything else, because he thought it was a very wicked and terrible thing to do.

The king stood so exactly in the path of the Brahmin that it was impossible to pass him by without taking any notice of him, and the unhappy man stood still, hanging down his head and looking very miserable. Without waiting for a moment, Prasannajit said to the Brahmin, “Do not grieve anymore. I will find your treasure for you, and give it back to you. If I fail to

do so, I will pay you as much as it was worth out of my own purse. I cannot bear to think of you killing yourself. Now tell me very carefully where you hid your gold and jewels, and everything about the place, to help me be sure.”

The Brahmin was greatly delighted to hear this, because he knew well that the king would keep his word, and that, even if his own treasure was never found, he would have plenty of money given to him by the king. He at once told Prasannajit exactly where he had hidden his money and jewels, and offered to take him there. The king agreed to go with him at once, and he and the Brahmin went straight to the big hole in the forest, the attendants following them a little way behind.

11. *If you had been the king, how would you have set about finding the treasure?*
12. *Was it a good or a bad thing for the Brahmin to have secured the help of the king?*



After the king had seen the big empty hole, he took a serious note of where it was, and the nearest way to it from the town. He returned to his palace, but only after telling the Brahmin to go back to the house he lived in, and wait there till he received a message from the king himself. He sent one of his attendants to a rich merchant of Sravasti, who had already done a good deal for the Brahmin, to order him to supply the holy man with all he needed. Very glad that after all he was not going to die, the Brahmin obeyed willingly, and for the next few days, he was taken care of by the merchant, who supplied him with plenty of food.

As soon as Prasannajit was back in his palace, he pretended that he was taken suddenly ill. His head ached badly, he said, and he could not make out what was the matter with him. He ordered a proclamation to be sent all round the town, telling all the doctors to come to the palace to see him. All the doctors at once hastened to obey, each of them hoping that he would be the one to cure the king and win a great reward.

So many of the doctors turned up that the big reception room was full of them, and they all glared at each other so angrily that the attendants kept

careful watch, worried they would begin to fight. One at a time, they were taken to the king's private room, but very much to their surprise and disappointment, he seemed quite well and in no need of help from them. Instead of talking about his own illness, he asked each doctor who his patients were in the town, and what medicines he was giving to them. Of course, Prasannajit's questions were carefully answered, but the king said nothing more, just waving his hand to show that the interview was done. Then the attendants led the visitor out. At last, a doctor came, who said something which led the king to keep him longer than he had kept any of the others.

This doctor was a very famous healer who had saved the lives of many of Prasannajit's subjects. He told the king that a merchant named Rudra was very ill, suffering greatly, but that he hoped to cure him by giving him the juice of a certain plant called nagaballa. If you're wondering what sort of a medicine is this, you must know something. At the time this story was written, doctors in India did not give their patients medicine, or write prescriptions for them to take to chemists or pharmacies, because there were no chemists in those days, such as there are in all the towns of the country now. A doctor just said to his patient, "you must take the juice of this or that plant" and the suffering person had to go into the fields or woods to find the plant or else to send a servant to do so.

When the king heard that the doctor had ordered Rudra to take the juice of the nagaballa plant, he cried, "No more doctors need come to see me!" After sending away the one who had told him what he wanted to know, he gave orders that Rudra should be sent for at once.

13. Can you guess why the king sent for the doctors?

14. Do you think Rudra had anything to do with stealing the Brahmin's treasure?



Ill and suffering though he was, Rudra did not dare disobey the king. So he came at once. As soon as he appeared, Prasannajit asked him how he was, and said he was sorry to have called him when he was ill. But the matter on which he wished to see him was of very great importance. Then he suddenly

added, “When your doctor ordered you to take the juice of the nagaballa plant, whom did you send to find it?”

To this, Rudra replied, trembling with fear, “My servant, O king, went looking for it in the forest. Having found it, he brought it to me.” “Go back and send that servant to me immediately,” was the reply. The merchant hurried away, wondering why the king wanted to see the man, and hoping that he himself would not get into disgrace on account of anything he had done to make king Prasannajit so angry.

15. Why did the king want the servant sent to him?

16. From what the story tells you so far, do you think Prasannajit was a good ruler of his kingdom?



When Rudra told his servant that he was to go to the palace to see the king, the man was dreadfully frightened, and begged his master not to make him go. This made Rudra pretty sure that he had done something wrong and was afraid of being found out.

“Go at once,” he said. “And whatever you do, speak the truth to the king. That will be your only chance if you have offended him.”

Again and again the servant entreated Rudra not to insist, and when he found it was no good, he asked him at least to come with him to the palace and plead for him with the king. The merchant knew then for certain that something was seriously wrong, and he consented to go to the palace with his servant, partly out of curiosity and partly out of fear for himself. When the two got to the palace, the attendants at once led the servant to the presence of the king, but they would not let the master go with him.

The servant entered the room and saw the king sitting on his throne. He fell on his knees at the foot of the steps, crying, “Mercy! Mercy!” He was right to be scared, for Prasannajit said to him in a loud voice: “Where are the gold and the jewels you took from the hole in the roots of the tree when you went to find the nagaballa plant for your master?”

The servant had actually taken all that money and jewels. He was so terrified when he found that the king knew the truth that he could not think

of anything to say. He just remained lying on the ground, trembling all over. Prasannajit too was silent, and the attendants waiting for orders behind the throne looked on, wondering what would happen now.

17. Have you guessed what the nagaballa plant had to do with finding out who had stolen the money and jewels?

18. If you had been the king, what punishment would you have ordered for the thief?



When the king did not say anything for the next ten minutes or so, the thief was all the more scared. He finally raised his head from the ground and looked at the king. But the king still said nothing. Something in his face made the wicked servant hope that he would not be punished too severely.

The king looked very strict, but not enraged against him. Plus, he also remembered his master's words, that no matter what happened, if he wanted to be safe from the king's anger, he should tell the truth. So the servant rose to his feet, and clasping his hands together as he held them up to Prasannajit, said in a trembling voice, "I will fetch the treasure, I will fetch the treasure."

"Then go at once," said the king, "and bring it here." When he said those words, there was a beautiful expression in his eyes, like he was not angry with the thief but glad that he had accepted his fault. This made the thief feel worse about what he had done. Anyone else would have not let him go without a harsh beating at least.

19. What do you think is the best way to make wicked people good?

20. What is the most powerful reason a man or woman or a child can have for trying to be good?



As soon as the king said, "Go at once," the servant literally started running away. He looked as eager to restore what he had stolen as he had been to hide it earlier. He had put it in another hole in the very depths of the forest,

and it was a long time before he got back to the palace with it, for it was very heavy. He had thought the king would send some guards with him, to see that he did not run away, and that they would have helped him to carry the sack full of gold and jewels; but nobody followed him. It was hard work to drag the heavy load all the way alone; but at last, quite late in the evening, he was back at the palace gates. The soldiers standing there let him pass without a word, and soon he was once more in the room in which the king had received him.

Prasannajit still sat on his throne, and the attendants still waited behind him, when the thief lay prostrate at the bottom of the steps leading up to the throne, with the sack beside him. He was so tired, he could hardly stand. He was panting and sweating, and looked like a really sorry figure. His heart was ready to beat out of his chest as he waited to hear what the king would say!

Prasannajit finally spoke, when he was sure that the thief's breath had stabilised. To everyone's astonishment, this is what he said, "Go back to your home now, and don't be a thief anymore."

The man was very thankful, and was not able to believe what had just happened. That he was free to go and that he was not to be terribly punished. Never again in the rest of his life did he take what did not belong to him, and he was never tired of telling his children and his friends of the goodness of the king who had forgiven him.

21. Do you think it would have been better for the thief to have been punished?

22. What lesson did the thief learn from what had happened to him?



The Brahmin had spent the time of waiting in prayers that his treasure should be given back to him. He had been telling people around him that if it all did not come back to him, he would starve himself to death. But he was full of delight when he came to know that it had been found. He hastened to the palace and was taken before the king, who said to him, "There is your treasure. Take it away, and make better use of it than before. If you lose it again, I shall not try to recover it for you."

The Brahmin was glad that he had got all his money and jewels back. But in the same moment, he also did not like to be told by the king to use it wisely. Besides this, he also wanted to have the thief punished. So in his high-mindedness, he began talking about that, instead of thanking the king for finding his treasure. He was so proud and self-centred that he did not think twice about the king's advice.

The king looked at him, just as he had looked at the thief and said, "The matter has ended for me and justice has been done. I have nothing to do with it anymore, and you may go in peace."

The Brahmin was accustomed to be honoured by everyone, from the king on his throne to the beggars in the street. He was astonished at the way in which Prasannajit had spoken to him. He would have said more, but the king made a sign to his attendants, two of whom dragged the sack to the entrance of the palace and left it there. So there was nothing for the Brahmin to do, but to take it away with him.

If you are wondering what happened to him and what he decided to do with his life and the treasure, then we will have to leave it to your imagination. Why don't you think of the two most probable ends to the story yourself!

23. *Do you think the Brahmin learnt anything from his loss and recovery of his treasure?*
24. *Was the Brahmin more wicked than the thief, or vice versa?*
25. *Do you think the Brahmin continued to be a miser for the rest of his life?*
26. *What were the chief characteristics of the king? What sort of a man do you think he was?*
27. *Which of the people in this story do you like and admire most, and which do you dislike most?*

*Would you like to color up this sketch of princess Pragma?
You will meet her in a few pages.*



**You could use pencil colors or sketch pens :)*

The Young King and the Magical Gifts





Far, far away in a town of India called Chinchini, there lived three brothers of noble birth. In days long gone, the people of this town worshipped and believed in ancient gods. So much so, that the gods are said to have appeared to those who called upon them for help. These three brothers lived happily in such a peaceful and faith-driven town of Chinchini. They had never known what it was to want for food, or clothes, or a house to live in. Each was married to a wife he loved, and for many years, they were all very happy. Presently, however, a great misfortune befell on their native country.

There was no rain for many, many weeks; and this is a very serious thing in a hot country like

India. Imagine, when it does not rain for a long time, the ground becomes so parched and hard that nothing can grow in it. The sun sent forth its burning rays, drying up all the water in the tanks and changing what had been a beautiful country - covered with green crops good for food - into a dreary desert, where neither men nor animals could get anything to eat. The result of this was a terrible famine, in which hundreds of people and animals died. Unfortunately, little children and old people were the first to suffer.

Now the three brothers did not have any children, but got frightened at the state of things. They thought to themselves, "If we do not escape from this dreadful land, we shall die."

They said to each other, "Let us leave this place and go somewhere where we are sure of being able to get plenty to eat and drink. We will not take our wives with us; they would only make things worse for us. Let us leave them to look after themselves; after all, we have a good enough house."

- 1. What do you think of the behaviour of the three brothers? Was there any excuse for leaving their wives behind them?*
- 2. Do you think the wives themselves could have been to blame in any way in the matter?*



So the three wives were left behind, and had to manage as best as they could without their husbands, who did not even take the trouble to wish them goodbye. The wives were at first very sad and lonely. But then, a great joy came to one of them, which made the other two very happy as well. This joy was the birth of a little boy, whose two aunts loved him almost as much as his mother did. Let us not get into details of how they all got food and water to live while the famine was going on. But let's take it as a given that they had enough for them. They were not starved for sure, because the baby boy grew fast, and was a strong, healthy little fellow.

One night, all the three wives had the same dream, a very wonderful one. God Shiva, one of the chief gods in the Hindu belief in India, appeared to them. He told them that, looking down from Heaven, he had noticed how tenderly they cared for the new-born baby, and that he wished them to call him Putraka. Besides this, he astonished them by adding that as a reward for the unselfish way in which they had behaved, they would find one hundred thousand gold pieces under the little child's pillow every morning, and that one day the little child would be a king.

3. Do you think the three women wanted to be rewarded for loving the baby?

4. Is it a good thing to have a great deal of money?



The wonderful dream was fulfilled, and the mother and aunts called the boy Putraka. Every morning, they found the gold pieces under his pillow, and they took care of the money for him, so that when he grew up, he was the richest man in the whole country. He had a happy childhood and boyhood. But he was sad and disappointed on only one account - he did not like having never seen his father. His mother told him about the famine before he was born, and how his father and uncles had gone away and never come back.

He often said, "When I am older, I will find my father and bring him home again." He used his money to help others, and one of the best things he did was to irrigate the land. He made canals into which water was made to flow in times when there was plenty of rain, so that there was no danger of there being another famine, such as that which had driven his father and uncles away. The country became very fruitful; everybody had enough to eat

and drink; and Putraka was very much loved, especially by the poor and unhappy. When the king ruling over the land died, everybody wanted Putraka to take his place, and he was chosen at once.

5. *Will you describe the kind of man you think Putraka was?*

6. *Do you know of any other country besides India in which everything depends on agriculture and irrigation?*



Another thing that Putraka did when he became the king was to make great friends with his brahmin subjects. Brahmins are always very fond of travelling, and Putraka thought, if he were good and generous to them, they would talk about him wherever they went. Somewhere in his heart, he hoped that perhaps through them, his father and uncles would hear about him. He felt sure that if they knew he was now a king ruling over their native land, they would want to come back. He gave the brahmins plenty of money, and told them to try and find his father and uncles. If they did, they were to say how anxious he was to see them, and promise them everything they wanted, if only they would return.

7. *Do you think it was wise of Putraka to be so anxious to get his father and uncles back, when he knew how selfish they had been in leaving his mother and aunts behind them?*

8. *Can you suggest anything else Putraka might have done in the matter?*



As if in fulfilment of his hopes, something interesting happened. Wherever the brahmins went, they talked about the country they came from and the wonderful young king who ruled over it. Putraka's father and uncles, who were after all not so very far off, heard the stories about him, and asked the brahmins many questions. The answers made them very eager to see Putraka, but they did not at first realize that he was closely related to them. Only when they heard the name of his mother did they guess the truth. Putraka's father knew, when he deserted his wife, that he was going to be blessed with a child soon; which made it even more wicked of him to leave

her. Now, however, he forgot all about that, only thinking how he could make as much use as possible of the son who had become a king. He wanted to go back at once alone, but the uncles were not going to allow that. They meant to get all they could out of Putraka too; and the three selfish men, who were now quite old, set off together for the land they had left so long ago.

They arrived safely, and made their way to the palace, where they were received with great rejoicings. None of the wives said a word of reproach to the husbands who had deserted them. And as for Putraka, he was so overjoyed at having his father back, that he gave him a beautiful house to live in and a great deal of money. He was very good to his uncles too, and felt that he had now really nothing left to wish for.

9. Do you think Putraka showed strength or weakness of character in the way he received the travellers?

10. How do you think the king ought to have behaved to his father and uncles?



The three wives very soon had good reason to wish their husbands had stayed away. Instead of being grateful for Putraka's generosity, they were very unkind and exacting. They were never pleased with anything, and no matter what Putraka had given them, they were always trying to get more. In fact, they were silly as well as wicked; for they did not realize that this was not the way to make the king love them or wish to keep them with him.

Giving their selfishness a beating, they also became jealous of Putraka, and began to wish to get rid of him. His father hated to feel that his son was king, while he was only one of his subjects.

He made up his mind to kill him, hoping that if he could only get rid of him, he might rule over the country in his stead. He thought and thought how best to manage this, and did not at first mean to tell his brothers anything about it. But in the end, he decided to have them on his side. So he invited them to go with him to a secret place to talk the matter over.

11. What qualities did Putraka's father show in this plot against his son?

12. Was there any other way in which the king's father could have gained a share in governing the land?



After many meetings, the three wicked men decided that they would pay someone to kill the king. They were sure they would make the murderer they chose swear that he would never tell who had ordered him to do the terrible deed.

Now in those times, swearing by something you hold sacred and a verbal promise was just as good as legal documentation. So they finally found a man bad enough to take money for such an evil purpose, who also swore to secrecy. The next thing to do was to decide where and when the deed was to be done.

Putraka had been brought up by his mother and aunts very well, and often went to a beautiful temple near his palace to pray. Since he was so deeply loved by his people, he would go alone, without his guards. He was a good king to his people and he would sometimes stop at the temple a long time, winning fresh wisdom and strength to do the work he was trusted with. He made it a point to pray, not only for himself, but for his father, his mother, his aunts and uncles, and for the people he loved so much.

The murderer was told to wait in this temple, and when the young king was absorbed in prayer, to fall suddenly upon him and kill him. Then, when Putraka was dead, he was to take his body and bury it far away in the depths of the forest where it could never be found. At first it seemed likely that this cruel plot would succeed. To ensure that this could be done without any hindrance, the murderer got two other men as wicked as himself to come and help him, promising to give them a share in the reward.

But the god who had taken care of Putraka ever since he was born, did not forget him now. As the young king prayed, forgetting everything, in his earnest praying for those he loved, he did not see or hear the evil men drawing stealthily close to him. Their arms were uplifted to slay him, and the gleam of the weapons flashed upon him. But then, just as suddenly, the heavenly guardian of the temple - who never left it day or night, but was generally invisible - appeared and cast a spell upon the wicked men. As a result, their hands were arrested in the very act to strike.

Putraka was a smart warrior too, and the gleam of the weapons had broken his prayers. But imagine! What a wonderful sight that must have been, when

Putraka looked round and saw the men who had come to kill him, frozen! He knew at once that he had been saved from a dreadful death by a messenger from the god he had been worshipping. As he gazed at the men, the guardian faded away and he was left alone with them. Slowly, the spell cast on them was broken, and they dropped their weapons, prostrated themselves, and clasped their hands in an appeal for mercy to the man they had meant to destroy. Putraka looked at them quietly and sadly. He felt no anger against them, only a great thankfulness for his escape.

He spoke to the men very sternly, asking them why they wished to harm him. Finally, after great cries of mercy and apologies, the chief murderer told Putraka who had sent them.

The knowledge that his father wished to kill him shocked and grieved the young king terribly. But being a king, he did not let it show. He told the men that he forgave them, for they were not to be blamed. He also made them promise to never go back to the ones who had bribed them to kill him. He then gave them some money and told them to leave him.

13. What do you think is the most beautiful incident in this scene in the temple?

14. What do you suppose were the thoughts of the murderers when they left the temple after Putraka forgave them?



When Putraka was alone, he threw himself upon the ground and wept bitterly. He felt that he could never be happy again, never trust anyone again. He had loved his father and uncles so dearly, so sincerely. It had been such a joy to him to give them pleasure, and yet they hated him and wished to kill him. He wondered whether he was himself to blame for what had happened. He also began thinking he was not worthy to be king, if he could make the mistake of being so generous to those who could have such hard thoughts about him. Perhaps, after all, it would be better for his country to have another king. He did not feel as if he could go back to his palace and meet his father and uncles again.

“What shall I do? What shall I do?” he cried, his sobs choking his voice. Never in all his life had he thought it possible to be so miserable as he was now. Everything seemed changed and he felt as if he were himself a different

person. The only thing that comforted him at all was the thought of his mother, whose love had never failed him. But even that was spoiled by the remembrance that it was her husband who had wished to kill him. She must never know the truth, for it would break her heart. Yet how could he keep it from her? Then the idea came to him that the best thing he could do was to go away and never see his own people again.

15. What do you think was wrong in Putraka's way of looking at the past?

16. Was his idea of leaving his country and his people a sign of weakness or of strength?



In the end, the poor young king decided that he would go right away, as his father and uncles had done. His mind being made up, he became more cheerful and began to think he might meet with some interesting adventures in a new country, where nobody knew anything about him. As soon as it was light, he wandered off into the forest, feeling very lonely, but at the same time, taking a certain pleasure in being entirely his own master.

After a while, Putraka did not find the forest so very lonely. He had not gone far into the forest when he suddenly came to a little clearing. The trees there had been cut down and two stronglooking men were wrestling together. Putraka watched them for a little while, wondering what they were fighting about.

Then he called out, "What are you doing here? What are you quarrelling about?"

The men were greatly surprised to hear Putraka's voice, for they thought that they were quite alone. They stopped fighting for a minute or two, and one of them said, "We are fighting for three very precious things which were left behind by our father."

"What are those things?" asked Putraka.

"A bowl, a stick and a pair of shoes," was the reply. "Whoever wins the fight will get them all. There they lie on the ground."

"What!" cried Putraka, laughing as he looked at the things, which seemed to him worth very little. "I shouldn't trouble to fight about such trifles, if I were you."

“Trifles!” exclaimed one of the men angrily. “You don’t know what you are talking about. They are worth more than their weight in gold. Whoever gets the bowl will find plenty of food in it whenever he wants it; the owner of the stick has only to write his wishes on the ground with it and he will get them; and whoever puts on the shoes can fly through the air to any distance.”

17. Which of these things would you rather have?

18. What lesson do you learn from what the men said about the things on the ground?



When Putraka heard the magical powers of these seemingly small things, he was determined to get the three treasures for himself. He did not even once consider that it would be very wrong to take what did not belong to him.

“It seems a pity to fight,” he said. “Why don’t you race for the things, and let whoever wins the race have them? That banyan tree over there would make a good winning post and I will be the umpire.”

The brothers were very simple fellows and could not understand what Putraka had in mind. They said at once, “All right. We won’t fight; we’ll race instead. You can give us the start.” Putraka agreed and set them off. The moment they took off, he picked up the bowl and the staff, put on the shoes, and flew straight up into the air with the treasures. When the brothers came back, disputing about which of them had won, there was not a sign of Putraka, the bowl, the stick or the shoes. They guessed at once what had happened, and after staring up in the air for a long time, they went home, feeling very much enraged with the man who had cheated them, and ashamed of having been so stupid as to trust him.

19. What do you think of Putraka’s behaviour in this matter?

20. Do you think the two brothers would have been able to use it wisely, given their naivety?



On and on flew Putraka, full of eager delight in the new power of flight. How he loved rushing through the air, cleaving it like a bird on the wing! All that he now wished for was someone to enjoy his new powers with. That's when he found himself above a beautiful city, with towers and pinnacles and minarets gleaming in the sunshine.

“Ah!” he thought, “that is the place for me. I will go down there, and see if I can find a nice house to live in, and some people to make friends with, who will not try to kill me or to cheat me, but love me and be grateful to me for any kindness I show them.”

As Putraka was hovering in the air above the town to which he had taken such a fancy, he noticed a little house which rather pleased him. Though it was poor-looking, there was something cheerful and home-like about it. Down he sped and alighted at the door. Only one poor old woman lived in the house, and when Putraka knocked and asked if he might come in, she said “Yes” at once.

He gave her some money, and told her he would like to live with her, if she would let him do so. She was only too glad to consent, for she was very lonely; and the two lived happily together for a long time.

21. Do you think if Putraka had flown home on his wonderful shoes, taking his staff and bowl with him, his father and uncles would still have tried to kill him?

22. How could Putraka have prevented them from doing him harm if he had returned to his home with these magical things?



As time passed, the old woman grew very fond of Putraka, caring for him and waiting on him as if he had been her own son. She was so anxious that he should be happy that she became afraid he would become tired of living alone with her. So she said to him one day, “My dear adopted son, you ought to have a wife to keep you company. I know the very one for you, the only one really worthy of you. She is a princess, and her name is Pragya. She is so very lovely that every man who sees her falls in love with her and wants to carry her off. So she is most carefully guarded in the top rooms of a great palace, as high as the summits of the loftiest mountains.”

When Putraka heard this, he was all eagerness to see the princess, and at once determined to go forth to seek her. He was more than ever glad that he had stolen the shoes, because he knew that they would carry him even to the top of the highest mountains.

23. What qualities did the old woman show when she told Putraka about the princess?

24. What faults of character did the young king show when he decided at once to leave the old woman who had been so good to him?



Putraka started his journey in search of Pragya that very evening. He took with him his bowl and staff. The old woman gave him very careful instructions on which way to go, and begged him to come back to tell her how he had got on. He promised he would, thanked her for all she had done for him, and flew away in a great state of excitement. She watched him till he was quite out of sight, and then went sadly into her lonely home, wondering if she would ever see him again.

It was not long before Putraka came in sight of the palace. It was a beautiful night, and the moon was shining full upon the room in which the princess was asleep. It was a very big one, with costly furniture and priceless tapestry hung around the walls. On looking closely, he noticed that there were doors behind the tapestry, leading to other apartments, where Pragya's attendants slept. There were several others that kept watch, fearing someone would intrude upon their mistress. No one thought of guarding the windows, for they were so high up that only a bird could reach them.

The young king alighted on the ledge of the window of the princess' room, and looked in. There, on a golden bed, amongst soft cushions and embroidered coverings, lay the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She looked so lovely that he fell in love with her at once and gave a loud cry of delight. This woke the princess, who started up and was just about to scream out aloud in her terror at seeing a man looking in at the window. But Putraka made himself invisible with the help of his magic staff. Then, thinking she had been dreaming, Pragya lay down again, and the king began talking to her in a low voice, telling her he had heard of her beauty and had flown from

far away to see her. He begged her to allow him to show himself to her, and added: "I will go back to where I come from, if you wish it."

Putraka's voice was so gentle, and it seemed to Pragya so wonderful that a man could fly and make himself invisible, that she was full of curiosity to see him and find out all about him. So she gave her consent, and immediately afterwards, the young king stood within the room, looking so noble and so handsome that she too fell in love at first sight. Putraka told her all about his life and adventures, which interested her very much. She was glad, she said, that he was a king; but she would have loved him just as well, whoever he might have been.

After a long talk, Pragya begged him to leave her for fear her attendants should discover him and tell her father about him. "My father would never let me marry you," she declared, "unless you were to come with many followers as a king to ask my hand. How can you do that when you are only a wandering exile?"

25. Was there any reason to fear that Putraka would be discovered when he could make himself invisible at any moment?

26. What do you think would have been the right thing for Putraka and Pragya to do when they found out that they loved each other?



It was very difficult to persuade Putraka to go, but at last he flew away. Every night after that, however, he came to see Pragya, spending the days sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, and using his magic bowl to supply himself with food. Alas, he forgot all about the dear old woman to whom he owed all his happiness, and she slowly gave up hope of ever seeing him again. He could have easily flown to her cottage and cheered her with his presence, but he was so wrapped up in his love for Pragya that everything else went out of his head.

This very selfishness got him into serious trouble, for he became careless about making himself invisible when he flew up to princess

Pragya's window. One night, he was discovered by a guardian of the palace. The matter was at once reported to the king, who could not at first believe such a thing was possible. The man must have seen a big bird, that was all. The king, however, ordered one of his daughter's ladies to keep

watch every night in an ante-room, and to come and tell him in the morning if she had seen or heard anything unusual.

The lady the king had chosen for this task loved the princess very much. Like many of her fellow attendants, she thought it was very cruel of the king to punish his own child for being so beautiful, by shutting her up. It so happened that the very first night she was on guard, Putraka had flown a very, very long way, not noticing where he was going, because he was thinking so earnestly of Pragya. When at last he flew in at her window, he was so weary that he sank down on a couch and fell fast asleep. The princess too was tired because she had stayed awake talking to her lover so many nights that she had hardly taken any rest. So when the lady peeped through the slit in the tapestry, there, by the light of the night lamp, she saw the young king lying unconscious, whilst the princess was asleep.

Very cautiously, the attendant crept to the side of Putraka, and took a long, long look at him. She noticed how handsome he was, and that he was dressed in beautiful clothes. She especially noticed the turban he wore, because in India the rank to which men belong is shown by the kind of turbans they wear.

“This is no common man,” she thought, “but a prince or king in disguise. What shall I do now? I will not raise an alarm which might lead to this beautiful young lover being killed and the heart of my dear mistress broken.”

27. If you had been the lady who found Putraka in Pragya's room, what would you have done?

28. What could Putraka have done to guard against being discovered?



After hesitating a long time, the lady made up her mind that she would only put some mark in the turban of Putraka, so that he could be known again, and let him escape that night at least. So she stole back to her room, fetched a tiny brooch, and fastened it in the folds of the turban, where the wearer was not likely to notice it himself. This done, she went back to listen at the door.

It was nearly morning when Putraka woke up, very much surprised at finding himself lying on the couch, for he did not remember throwing himself down on it. Starting up, he woke Pragya, who was terribly

frightened. She expected her ladies to come in any minute to help her to dress. She entreated Putraka to make himself invisible and fly away at once. He did so; and, as usual, wandered about until the time should come to go back to the palace. But he still felt too tired to fly, and instead walked about in the town belonging to Pragya's father.

The lady who had been on guard had half a mind to tell her mistress that her secret was discovered. But before she could get a chance to do so, she was sent for by the king, who asked her if she had seen or heard anything during the night. She tried very hard to escape from betraying Pragya. But she hesitated so much in her answers that the king guessed there was something she wanted to hide. The king told her, if she did not reveal the whole truth, he would have her head shaved and send her to prison. So she told how she had found a handsome man, beautifully dressed, fast asleep in Pragya's room; but she did not believe her mistress knew anything about it, because she too was asleep.

The king was in a terrible rage, and the lady was afraid he would order her to be punished. But he only went on questioning her angrily about what the man was like, so that he might be found and brought before him. Then the lady confessed that she had put a brooch in his turban, comforting herself with the thought that when the king saw Putraka and knew that Pragya loved him, he might perhaps relent and let them be married.

When the king heard about the brooch, he was greatly pleased. Instead of ordering the lady to be punished, he told her, when the man who had dared to approach his daughter was found, he would give her a great reward. He then sent forth hundreds of spies to hunt for the man with a brooch in his turban. And Putraka was very soon found, strolling quietly about in the marketplace.

He was so taken by surprise that even though he had his staff in his hand and his shoes and bowl in the pocket of his robes, he had no time to write his wishes with the staff, or to put on the shoes. So he submitted to be dragged to the palace. He did all he could to persuade those who had found him to let him go, telling them he was a king and would reward them well. They only laughed at him and dragged him to the palace, where he was at once taken before the king, who was sitting on his throne, surrounded by his court, in a great hall lined with soldiers. The big windows were wide open, and noticing this, Putraka did not feel afraid at all. He knew he had only to slip on his shoes and fly out of one of the windows, if he could not persuade the king to

let him marry Pragya. So he stood quietly at the foot of the throne, and looked bravely into the face of his dear one's father.

This only made the king angrier, and he began criticizing Putraka, asking him how he dared to enter the room of his daughter. Putraka answered quietly that he loved Pragya and wished to marry her. He was himself a king, and would give her all she had been used to. But it was all no good, for it only made the king angrier with each minute.

He rose from his throne, and stretching out his hand, he cried, "Let him be scourged and placed in close confinement!"

Then Putraka wrote rapidly on the ground with his staff his wish that no one should be able to touch him. He bent down and slipped on his magic shoes. The king, the courtiers and the soldiers remained exactly as they were, staring at him in astonishment, as he rose up in the air and flew out of one of the windows. Straight away, he sped to Pragya's palace and into her room, where she was pacing to and fro in anxiety about him; for she had heard of his having been taken prisoner and feared that her father would order him to be killed.

29. What do you think would have been the best thing for the king to do when Putraka was brought before him?

30. If Putraka had not had his shoes with him, how could he have escaped from the king's palace?



Pragya was delighted when Putraka flew in at her window once again. But she was still trembling with fear for him and begged him to go away to his own land as quickly as possible.

"I will not go without you," replied Putraka. "Wrap yourself up warmly, for it is cold flying through the air, and we will go away together, and your cruel father shall never see you again."

Pragya wept at hearing this, for it seemed terrible to her to have to choose between the father she loved, and Putraka. But in the end, her lover got his own way, and just as those who were seeking him were heard approaching, he seized his dear one in his arms and flew off with her. He did not return to his own land even then, but directed his course to the Ganges, the grand and

beautiful river which the people of India love and worship, calling it their Mother Ganga. By the banks of the sacred stream the lovers rested, and with the aid of his magic bowl, Putraka soon had a good and delicious meal ready, which they both enjoyed very much.

As they ate, they consulted together what they had better do now, and Pragya, who was as clever as she was beautiful, said, “Would it not be a good thing to build a new city in this lovely place? You could do it with your marvellous staff, could you not?”

“Of course, I could,” said Putraka laughing. “Why didn’t I think of it myself?” Very soon a wonderful town rose up, which the young king wished to be as much as possible like the home he had left, only larger and fuller of fine buildings than it. When the town was made, he wished it to be full of happy inhabitants, with temples in which they might worship, priests to teach them how to be good, markets in which food and all that was needed could be bought, tanks and rivulets full of pure water, soldiers and officers to defend the gates, elephants on which he and his wife could ride, everything in fact that the heart of man or woman could desire.

The first thing Putraka and Pragya did after the rise of their own town was to get married in accordance with the rites of their religion. For many, many years, they reigned wisely over their people, who loved them and their children with all their hearts.

Amongst the attendants on those children was the old woman who had shown kindness to Putraka in his loneliness and trouble. For when he told Pragya the story of his life, she reproached him for his neglect of one to whom he owed so much. She made him feel quite ashamed of himself, and he flew away and brought the dear old lady back with him, to her very great delight.

31. Which of the people in this story do you like best?

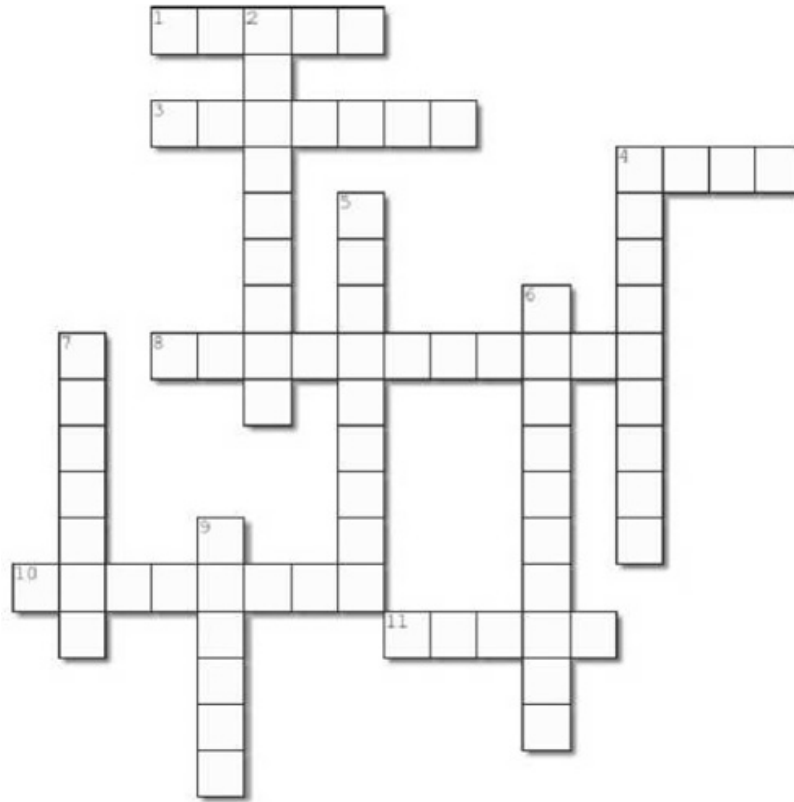
32. Do you think Putraka deserved all the happiness which came to him through stealing the wand, the shoes and the bowl?

33. Can you suggest any way in which he could have atoned for the wrong he did to the brothers whose property he took?

34. What is the chief lesson to be learnt from this story?

Magical Gifts

Complete the crossword puzzle below



ACROSS

- I. Long stick used to support walking*
- 3. The young boy who became king*
- 4. Used to serve and eat*
- 8. Restricting or shutting in a small place*
- 10. An unexpected event*
- II. Use if supernatural or mysterious forces to do things*

DOWN

- 2. a person employed to help/ provide service*
- 4. Pleasing to the senses and mind*
- 5. Unable to be seen*
- 6. Doubt/ pausing before doing or saying something*
- 7. Eager to know or learn something*

9. The princess who was confined

Adventures with the Jewelled Arrow





In the city of Vardhaman in India, there lived a powerful king named Virabhuja. Going by the custom in his native land, he had many wives, each of whom had several sons. Of all his wives, this king loved best the one named Gunika. And of all his sons, her youngest-born named Sringabhuja, was his favourite. Gunika was not only very beautiful, but also very wise and kind. She was so patient that nothing could make her angry, so unselfish that she always thought of others before herself, and so wise that she was able to understand how others were feeling, however different their natures were from her own.

Gunika's son Sringabhuja resembled his mother in her beauty and her unselfishness. He was also very strong and very clever, while his brothers were quite unlike him. They wanted to have everything their own way, and they were very jealous of their father's love for him. They were always trying to do him harm, and though they often quarrelled amongst themselves, they would band together to try and hurt him.

It was very much the same with the king's wives. They hated Gunika, because their husband loved her more than he did them, and they constantly came to him with stories they had made up of the wicked things she had done. Amongst other things, they told the king that Gunika did not really love him, but cared more for someone else.

The most bitter of all against her was the wife called Lekha, who was cunning enough to know what sort of tale the king was likely to believe. The very fact that Virabhuja loved Gunika so deeply convinced him readily that perhaps she did not return his affection, and he longed to find out the truth. So he also made up a story, thinking by its means to find out how she felt for him. He therefore went one day to Gunika's private apartments, and having sent all her attendants away, he told her he had some very sad news for her, which he had heard from his chief astrologer. Astrologers, you know, are wise men, who are supposed to be able to read the secrets of the stars, and learn from them things which are hidden from ordinary human beings. That's why Gunika did not doubt anything her husband was about to tell her. She listened eagerly, her heart beating very fast in her fear that some trouble was coming to those she loved.

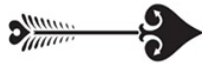
Great indeed was her sorrow and surprise when Virabhuja went on to say that the astrologer had told him that a terrible misfortune threatened him and his kingdom and the only way to prevent it was to shut Gunika up in prison for the rest of her life. The poor queen could hardly believe that she had heard rightly. She knew she had done no wrong, and could not understand how putting her in prison could help anybody. She was quite sure that her husband loved her, and no words could have expressed her pain at the thought of being sent away from him and her dear son. Yet she made no resistance, not even asking Virabhuja to let her see Sringabhuja once.

She just bowed her beautiful head and said, “Be it unto me as my lord wills. If he wishes my death, I am ready to lay down my life.”

This submission made the king feel even more unhappy than before. He longed to take his wife in his arms and tell her he would never let her go. Perhaps if she had looked at him then, he would have seen all her love for him in her eyes, but she remained perfectly still with bowed head, waiting to hear what her fate was to be. Then the thought entered Virabhuja’s mind: “She is afraid to look at me. I am sure what Lekha said was true.”

1. Can a true lover suspect the partner?

2. Is true love ever jealous?



So the king summoned his guards and ordered them to take his wife to the prison and leave her there. She went with them without making any resistance, only turning once to look lovingly at her husband as she was led away. Virabhuja returned to his own palace. He had just reached when he got a message from Lekha, begging him to give her an interview. She said she had something of very great importance to tell him. The king consented at once, thinking to himself, “Perhaps she has found out that what she told me about my dear Gunika is not true.”

Great then was his disappointment when the wicked woman told him she had discovered a plot against his life. Gunika’s son, along with some of the chief men of the kingdom, she said, had agreed together to kill him, so that Sringabhuja might reign in his stead. She and some of the other wives had overheard conversations between them, and were terrified lest their beloved king should be hurt. The young prince, she declared, had had some trouble in persuading the nobles to help him, but he had succeeded at last.

Virabhuja simply could not believe this story, for he trusted his son as much as he loved him. He sent his mischief-maker wife Lekha away, telling her not to dare to enter his presence again. But even after all that, he could not get the matter out of his head. He had Sringabhuja carefully watched. As nothing against him was found out, he was beginning to feel more easy in his mind, and even thinking of going to see Gunika in prison to ask her to confide in him. Then something happened which led him to fear that after all his dear son was not true to him. This was what made him uneasy.

He had a wonderful arrow, set with precious jewels, which had been given to him by a magician, and had the power of hitting without fail whatever it was aimed at from however great a distance. The very day he had meant to visit Gunika in the prison, he could not find this arrow at the place in which he had kept it, carefully concealed. That made him very anxious. Because if it fell in the wrong hands, it could be the end of him too. After looking around in vain, he summoned all those who were employed in the palace. He asked if any of them knew anything about the arrow. He promised that he would forgive anyone who helped him to get it back, even if it were the thief himself. In his distress and anxiety, he added that if it was not found in three days, he would have all the servants beaten until the one who had stolen it confessed.

3. Do you think this was the best way to find out who had taken the arrow?

4. How would you have set about finding out the truth if you had been the king?



Lekha, who had told the wicked story about Gunika, knew where the king kept the arrow.

She had taken it to her private rooms, and had sent for her own sons and those of the other wives, all of whom hated Sringabhuja, to tell them of a plot to get their brother into disgrace. “You know,” she said to them, “how much more your father loves Sringabhuja than he does any of you! When he dies, he will leave the kingdom and all his money to him. Now I will help you to prevent this by getting rid of Sringabhuja.”

The brothers were easily convinced, because they had been brought up under such connivance too. Lekha further said, “You must have a great shooting match, in which your brother will be delighted to take part, for he is very proud of his skill with the bow and arrow. On the day of the match, I

will send for him and give him the jewelled arrow belonging to your father to shoot with, telling him the king had said I might lend it to him. Your father will then think he stole it and order him to be killed.”

The brothers were all delighted at what they thought was a very clever scheme, and did just what Lekha advised. When the day came, great crowds assembled to see the shooting at a large target set up near the palace. The king himself and all his court were watching the scene, and it was difficult for the guards to keep the course clear. The brothers, beginning at the eldest, all pretended to try and hit the target, but none of them really wished to succeed. They thought when Sringabhuja’s turn came, as their father’s youngest son, he would win the match with the jewelled arrow. Then the king would order him to be brought before him, and he would be condemned to death or imprisonment for life.

Now, as very often happens, something upset the carefully planned plot. Just as Sringabhuja was about to shoot at the target, a big crane flew to the ground between him and the target. It became impossible for him to take proper aim. The brothers, seeing the bird and anxious to shoot it for themselves, all began to clamour, that they should be allowed to shoot again. Only once the crane was out of the way would Sringabhuja shoot correctly with the jewelled arrow, they thought. Nobody made any objection, and Sringabhuja stood aside, with the jewelled arrow in the bow, waiting to see what they would do, but feeling sure that he would be the one to kill the bird. Brother after brother tried, but the great creature still remained untouched.

That is when a travelling mendicant stepped forward and cried aloud, “That is no bird, but an evil magician who has taken that form to deceive you all. If he is not killed before he takes his own form again, he will bring misery and ruin upon this town and the surrounding country.”

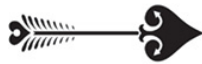
You know perhaps that mendicants are often holy men whose advice even kings are glad to listen to. When everyone heard what this man said, there was great excitement and terror. Many stories of rakshasas or evil magicians having brought misfortune to big kingdoms had been heard by all these people gathered here.

The brothers all wanted to try their luck once more, in becoming the most able archer to have nipped the trouble in the bud. But the beggar checked them, saying, “No, no. Where is your youngest brother Sringabhuja? He alone will be able to save your homes, your wives and your children, from destruction.”

Then Sringabhuja came forward, and as the sun flashed upon the jewels in the stolen arrow, revealing to the watching king that it was his own beloved son who had taken it, the young prince let it fly straight for the bird. It wounded, but did not kill the crane, which flew off with the arrow sticking in its breast, the blood dripping from it in its flight, which became gradually slower and slower. At the sight of the bird going off with the precious jewelled arrow, the king was filled with rage and sent orders that Sringabhuja should be fetched to his presence immediately. But before the messengers reached him, he had started in pursuit of the bird, guided by the blood-drops on the ground.

5. Did the brothers show wisdom in the plot they laid against their brother?

6. What do you think were the chief qualities of Sringabhuja?



As Sringabhuja sped along after the crane, the beggar made some strange signs in the air with the staff. Magically, such clouds of dust arose that no one could see in which direction the young prince had gone. The brothers and Lekha were very much dismayed at the way things had turned out, and greatly feared that the king's anger would vent itself on them, now that Sringabhuja had disappeared.

Virabhuja did send for them, and asked them many questions. They all guarded the secret of how Sringabhuja had got the arrow, and promised to do all they could to help to get it back. Again the king thought he would go and see the mother of his dear youngest son, but again something held him back. Poor Gunika was left alone, no one ever going near her, except the attendant who gave her the daily food. After trying everything possible to find out where Sringabhuja had gone, the king began to show special favour to his other sons. Slowly, as months passed by, it seemed as if the young prince and the jewelled arrow were both forgotten.

Meanwhile, Sringabhuja travelled on and on, tracking the bird with its blood drops. He reached the outskirts of a fine forest, through which many beaten paths led to a very great city. He sat down to rest at the foot of a wide-spreading tree, and was gazing up at the towers and pinnacles of the town, rising far upwards towards the sky. He had a feeling that he was no longer alone. He was right. Coming slowly along one of the paths was a lovely young girl, singing softly to herself in a beautiful voice. Her eyes were like those of a young doe, and her features were perfect in their form

and expression, reminding Sringabhuja of his mother, whom he was beginning to fear he would never see again.

When the young girl was quite close to him, he startled her by saying, “Can you tell me what is the name of this city?”

“Of course, I can,” she replied, “for I live in it. It is called Dhumapura, and it belongs to my father.” He sensed a word of caution in her sweet voice when she said, “He is a great magician named Agni, and he does not like strangers. Now tell me who you are and where have you come from?”

Then Sringabhuja told the maiden all about himself, and why he was wandering so far from home. The girl, whose name was Roop, listened very attentively. But when he came to the shooting of the crane, and how he had followed the bleeding bird in the hope of getting back his father’s jewelled arrow, she began to tremble.

“Alas, alas!” she said. “The bird you shot was my father, who can take any form he chooses. He returned home yesterday, and I drew the arrow from his wound and dressed the wound myself. He gave me the jewelled arrow to keep, and I will never part with it. As for you, the sooner you depart the better; for my father never forgives, and he is so powerful that you would have no chance of escape if he knew you were here.”

Hearing this, Sringabhuja became very sad, not because he was afraid of the magician, but because he knew that he already loved the fair maiden who stood beside him, and was resolved to make her his wife. She too felt drawn towards him and hated to think of his going away. Besides this, she had much to fear from her father, who was as cruel as he was mighty. Moreover, he had caused the death of many lovers who had wished to marry her. She had never cared for any of them, and had been content to live without a husband. Often, she stood between the wrath of her father and those he wished to injure. Wicked as he was, he loved her and wanted her to be happy.

7. Do you think that a really wicked man is able to love anyone truly?

8. What would have been the best thing for Sringabhuja to do, when he found out who the bird he had shot really was?



Roop did not take long to decide what was best for her to do. She said to the prince, “I will give you back your golden arrow, and you must make all

possible haste out of our country before my father discovers you are here.”

“No, no, no! A thousand times - no!” cried the prince. “Now that I have seen you, I can never, never leave you. Can you not learn to love me and be my wife?” Then he fell prostrate at her feet, and looked up into her face so lovingly that she could not resist him. She bent down towards him, and the next moment they were clasped in each other’s arms, quite forgetting all the dangers that threatened them. Roop was the first to remember her father, and drawing herself away from her lover, she said to him, “Listen to me, and I will tell you what we must do. My father is a magician, it is true, but I am his daughter, and I inherit some of his powers. If only you will promise to do exactly as I tell you, I think I may be able to save you, and perhaps even become your wife. I am the youngest of a large family and my father’s favourite. I will go and tell him that a great and mighty prince, hearing of his wonderful gifts, has come to our land to ask for an interview with him. Then I will tell him that I have seen you, fallen in love with you, and want to marry you. He will be flattered to think his fame has spread so far, and will want to see you, even if he refuses to let me be your wife. I will lead you to his presence and leave you with him alone. If you really love me, you will find a way to win his consent. But you must keep out of his sight till I have prepared the way for you. Come with me now, and I will show you a hiding place.”

Roop then led the prince far away into the depths of the forest, and showed him a large tree. Its wide-spreading branches touched the ground, completely hiding the trunk, in which there was an opening large enough for a man to pass through. Steps cut in the inside of the trunk led down to a wide space underground, and there the magician’s daughter told her lover to wait for her return.

“Before I go,” she said, “I will tell you my own password, which will save you from death if you should be discovered. It is lotus flower, and everyone to whom you say it, will know that you are under my protection.”

When Roop reached the palace, she found her father in a very bad humour, because she had not been to ask how the wound in his breast was getting on. She did her best to make up for her neglect, and when she had dressed the wound very carefully, she prepared a dainty meal for her father with her own hands. All this pleased him, and he was in quite an amiable mood.

She said to him, "Now I must tell you that I too have had an adventure. As I was gathering herbs in the forest, I met a man I had never seen before. A tall, handsome young fellow looking like a prince, who told me he was seeking the palace of a great and wonderful magician, of whose marvellous deeds he had heard. Who could that magician have been but you, my father?" She added, "I told him I was your daughter, and he entreated me to ask you to grant him an interview."

Agni listened to all this without saying a word. He was pleased at this fresh proof that his fame had spread far and wide, but he also guessed at once that Roop had not told him the whole truth. He waited for her to go on, and as she said no more, he suddenly turned angrily upon her and in a loud voice asked her, "And what did my daughter answer?"

Then Roop knew that her secret had been discovered. And rising to her full height, she answered proudly, "I told him I would seek you and ask you to receive him. And now I will tell you, my father, that I have seen the only man I will ever marry. If you forbid me to do so, I will take my own life, for I cannot live without him." "Send for the man immediately," cried the magician, "and you shall hear my answer when he appears before me."

"I cannot send for him," replied Roop, "because no one knows where I have left him, nor will I fetch him till you promise that you won't punish him."

At first Agni laughed aloud and declared that he would do no such thing. But his daughter was as obstinate as he was. He soon realised that he could not get his way with her unless he yielded to her, so he said crossly, "He will leave the palace alive. That is all I will say."

"But that is not enough," said Roop. "Say after me, 'Not a hair of his head shall be harmed, and I will treat him as an honoured guest,' or your eyes will never rest on him."

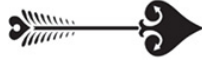
At last the magician promised, thinking to himself that he would find some way of getting rid of him, if he did not fancy him for a son-in-law. The words she wanted to hear were hardly out of her father's mouth before Roop sped away, as if on the wings of the wind, full of hope that all would be well. She found her lover anxiously awaiting her, and quickly explained how matters stood.

"You had better say nothing about me to my father at first," she said, "but only talk about him and all you have heard of him. If only you could get him to like you and want to keep you with him, it would help us very much. Then

you could pretend that you must go back to your own land. Rather than allow you to do so, he will be anxious for us to be married and to live here with him.”

9. *Do you think the advice Roop gave to Sringabhuja was good?*

10. *Can you suggest anything else she might have done?*



Sringabhuja loved Roop so much that he was ready to obey her in whatever she asked. So he at once went with her to the palace. On every side he saw signs of the strength and power of the magician. Each gate was guarded by tall soldiers in shining armour, who saluted Roop but scowled fiercely at him. He knew, if he had tried to pass alone, they would have prevented him from doing so. At last the two came to the great hall, where the magician was walking backwards and forwards, working himself into a rage at being kept waiting. He looked directly at the prince, and immediately recognised him as the man who had shot the jewelled arrow at him when he had taken the form of a crane. More than anything else, he wanted revenge. He was too cunning to let Sringabhuja guess that he knew him, and pretended to be very glad to see him. He even went so far as to say that he had long wished to find a prince worthy to wed his youngest and favourite daughter.

“You,” he added, “seem to me the very man. Young, handsome and - to judge from the richness of your dress and jewels - able to give my beloved one all she needs.”

The prince could hardly believe his ears, and Roop also was very much surprised. She guessed, however, that her father had some evil purpose in what he said, and looked earnestly at Sringabhuja in the hope of making him understand. But the prince was so overjoyed at the thought that she was to be his wife that he noticed nothing.

Agni added, “I only make one condition - You must promise that you will never disobey my commands. And do whatever I tell you without a moment’s hesitation.”

Sringabhuja, without waiting to think, said at once, “Only give me your daughter and I will serve you in any way you wish.”

“That’s settled then!” cried the magician, and he clapped his hands together. In a moment, a number of attendants appeared, and their master

ordered them to lead the prince to the best apartments in the palace, to prepare a bath for him, and do everything he asked them.

11. What great mistake did the prince make when he gave this promise?

12. What answer should he have made?



As Sringabhuja followed the servants, Roop managed to whisper to him, “Beware! Await a message from me!”

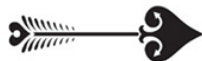
When he had bathed and was arraying himself in fresh garments provided by his host, a messenger arrived, bearing a sealed letter which he reverently handed to the prince. Sringabhuja guessed at once who had sent it. Anxious to read it alone, he hastily finished dressing up and dismissed the attendants.

“My beloved,” said the letter from Roop, “My father is plotting against you, and very foolish were you to promise you would obey him in all things. I have ten sisters, all exactly like me, all wearing dresses and necklaces which are exact copies of each other, so that few can tell me from the others. Soon you will be sent for to the great hall and we shall all be together there. My father will bid you to choose your bride from amongst us, and if you make a mistake, all will be over for us. But I will wear my necklace on my head instead of around my neck, and thus will you know your own true love. And remember, my dearest, to obey no future command without hearing from me, for I alone am able to outwit my terrible father.”

Everything happened exactly as Roop had described in her letter. The prince was sent for by Agni. As soon as he appeared, Agni gave him a garland of flowers and told him to place it around the neck of the maiden who was his promised bride. He feigned surprise, but without a moment’s hesitation, Sringabhuja picked out the right sister. The magician, though inwardly enraged, pretended to be so delighted at this proof of a lover’s clear-sightedness that he cried, “You are the son-in-law for me! The wedding shall take place tomorrow!”

13. Can you understand how it was that the magician did not notice the trick Roop had played upon him?

14. What fault blinds people to the truth?



When Sringabhujā heard what Agni said, he was full of joy. But Roop knew well that her father did not mean a word of it. She waited quietly beside her lover, till the magician bade all the sisters but herself leave the hall. Then the magician, with a very wicked look on his face, said, “Before the ceremony, there is just one little thing you must do for me, dear son-in-law... to be. Go outside the town, and near the most westerly tower, you will find a team of oxen and a plough awaiting you. Close to them is a pile of three hundred bushels of sesame seed. You must sow all of it today, or instead of a bridegroom, you will be a dead man tomorrow.”

Sringabhujā was very disappointed and heartbroken when he heard this. He knew it was an impossible task if he set out to do it. He could put in all he had, and still would be unable to.

But Roop whispered to him, “Fear not, for I will help you.”

This gave the prince some solace, but he left the palace sadly, to seek the field outside the city. The guards knew he was the accepted lover of their favourite mistress, because they had no clue of the planning going on in Agni’s mind. So they let him pass without a question. There, sure enough, near the western tower were the oxen, the plough and a great pile of seeds. Never before had poor Sringabhujā had to work for himself. He was not a farmer; he was a warrior. If he had been asked to defeat someone in a battle, he would have stood a fair chance. But this?

He gave himself a small pep talk - motivating himself, because he loved Roop very much. He knew he would do his best.

He was just about to begin to guide the oxen across the field, when everything began to change in front of his very eyes. He knew it was magic, and would soon find out who was behind it. Instead of an unploughed tract of land covered with weeds, was a field with rows and rows of regular furrows. The piles of seed were gone, and flocks of birds were gathering in the hope of securing some of it as it lay in the furrows.

Sringabhujā was staring in amazement at this beautiful scene when he saw Roop, looking lovelier than ever, coming towards him.

She said to him with a playful smile, “I am my father’s daughter, after all. I know how to compel even nature to do my will.” Then her expression changed suddenly as she cautioned, “But the danger is not over yet. Go back to the palace quickly, and tell my father that his wishes are fulfilled.”

15. Can the laws of nature ever really be broken?

16. What is the only way in which man can conquer nature?



The magician was very angry indeed when he heard that the field was ploughed and the seed sown. He knew at once that some magic had been at work, and suspected that Roop was the cause of his disappointment. Without a moment's hesitation he said to the prince, "I changed my mind after you left. I decided not to have that seed sown. Go back at once, and pile it up where it was before."

This time Sringabhuja felt no fear or hesitation, for he was sure that Roop would help him against her father, because she loved him. So he went back to the field, and there he found the whole vast space covered with millions and millions of ants. They were busily collecting the seed and piling it up against the wall of the town.

Again, Roop came to cheer him, and again she warned him that their trials were not yet over. She feared, she said, that her father might prove stronger than herself. "Whatever else he orders you to do, you must see me before you leave the palace. I will send my faithful messenger to appoint a meeting in some secret place."

Agni was not much surprised when the prince told him that his last order had been obeyed. This only made him surer that Roop was helping him. He thought to himself, 'I must get this tiresome fellow out of my domain. Even Roop will not be able to help him that way.' So he finally said to Sringabhuja, "Well, I suppose the wedding must take place tomorrow after all, for I am a man of my word. We must now set about inviting the guests. You shall have the pleasure of doing this yourself. That way, friends will know beforehand what a handsome young son-in-law I shall have. The first person to summon to the wedding is my brother Dhuma, who lives in a deserted temple a few miles from here. You must ride at once to that temple, rein up your steed opposite it, and call out to him loudly, "Dhuma, your brother Agni has sent me here to invite you to witness my marriage with his daughter Roop tomorrow. Come without delay!" Your message given, ride back to me. I will tell you what other tasks you must perform before the marriage tomorrow."

When Sringabhuja left the palace, he knew not where to seek a horse. But as he was nearing the gateway, a handsome boy approached him and said, "If my lord will follow me, I will tell him what to do."

Somehow the voice sounded familiar, and when the guards were left far enough behind to be out of hearing, the boy looked up at Sringabhujā with a smile that revealed Roop herself. “Come with me,” she said, and taking his hand, she led him to a tree beneath which stood a noble horse, richly caparisoned, which pawed the ground and whinnied to its mistress, as she drew near.

“You must ride this horse. He is named Marut and gallops at the speed of wind,” said Roop. “He will obey all that you whisper in his ear. Along with that, you must take earth, water, wood and fire with you, which I will give you. As my father said, go straight to the temple, and when you have called out your message, turn without a moment’s delay, and ride for your life as swiftly as you can. No guidance will be necessary; for Marut knows well what he has to do.”

Then Roop gave Sringabhujā a bowl of earth, a jar of water, a bundle of thorns and a brazier full of burning charcoal, hanging them by strong thongs upon the front of his saddle so that he could reach them easily. “My father,” she told him, “has given my uncle instructions to kill you, and he will follow you. When you hear him behind you, fling earth in his path; if that does not stop him, pour out some of the water; and if he still perseveres, scatter the thorns, and after it the burning charcoal before him.”

17. Can you discover any hidden meaning in the use of earth, water, thorns and fire, to stop the course of the wicked magician?

18. Do you think the prince loved Roop better than he loved himself?



Away went the prince after he had received these instructions; and very soon he found himself opposite the temple, with the images of three of the gods worshipped in India to prove that it had been a sanctuary before the magician took up his abode in it. Sringabhujā shouted out his message to Dhuma, following which the wicked man came rushing forth from the gateway, mounted on a huge horse, which seemed to be belching forth flames from its nostrils. For one terrible moment, Sringabhujā feared that he would lose himself to this magician. But Marut put forth all his strength, kept a little in advance of the enemy, giving the prince time to scatter earth behind him. Immediately, a great mountain rose up, barring the road, and Sringabhujā felt that he was saved. But he was mistaken. As he looked back, he saw Dhuma coming over the top of the mountain. Soon after, the

magician was close upon him again. So he emptied his bowl of water. A huge river with great waves became a strong barrier between them. Even this did not stop the mighty Arab horse, which swam rapidly across, the rider loudly shouting out orders to the prince to stop. When the prince heard the hoofs striking on the dry ground behind him again, he threw out the thorns, and a dense wood sprouted up, as if by magic, which for a few moments gave fresh hope of safety to Sringabhujā. But the magician succeeded in crossing the thorny woods; his clothes were nearly torn off his back, and his horse was bleeding from many wounds made by the cruel thorns.

Sringabhujā was getting weary now. He remembered that he had only one more chance of checking his relentless enemy. He could almost feel the breath of the panting steed as it drew near; and with a loud cry to his beloved Roop, he threw the burning charcoal on the road. In an instant, the grass by the wayside, the trees overshadowing it, and the magic wood which had sprung from the thorns, were alight, burning so fiercely that no living thing could approach them safely. The wicked magician was beaten at last, and was soon fleeing away, as fast as he could, with the flames following after him as if they were eager to consume him.

Whether his enemy ever got back to his temple, Sringabhujā did not know. Exhausted with all he had been through, the young prince was taken back to the palace by the faithful Marut, and there he found his dear Roop awaiting him. She told him that her father had promised her that if the prince came back, he would oppose her marriage no longer. "For," he said, "if he can escape your uncle, he must be more than mortal, and worthy even of my daughter. He does not in the least expect to see you again," added Roop. "And even if he allows us to marry, he will never cease to hate you. I am quite sure he knows that you shot the jewelled arrow at him when he was in the form of a crane. If I ever am your wife, he will try to punish you through me. But have no fear, I shall know how to manage him. Fresh powers have been lately given to me by another uncle whose magic is stronger than that of any of my other relations."

When Sringabhujā had bathed and rested, he robed himself once more in the garments he had worn the day he first saw Roop. Together, the lovers went to the great hall to seek an interview with Agni. The magician had been quite sure that he had got rid of the unwelcome suitor for his daughter's hand. So when he saw both of them approaching him, he could not contain his rage.

He stamped about, pouring out abuse, until he had quite exhausted himself, the lovers looking on quietly without speaking. At last, coming close to them, Agni shouted, in a loud harsh voice, "So you have not obeyed my orders! You have not bid my brother to the wedding. Your life is forfeit, and you will die tomorrow instead of marrying Roop. Describe the temple in which Dhuma lives and the appearance of its owner." Then Sringabhuja gave such an exact account of the temple, naming the gods whose images still adorned it, and of the terrible man riding the noble steed who had pursued him, that the magician was convinced against his will. Knowing that he must keep his word to Roop, he gave his consent for the preparations for the marriage to begin.

19. What is your opinion of the character of Agni?

20. Do you think he was at all justified in the way in which he treated his daughter and Sringabhuja?



The marriage was celebrated the next day with very great pomp, and a beautiful suite of rooms was given to the bride and bridegroom. They both could not feel safe or happy, because they knew that Agni hated them.

The prince soon began to feel homesick and anxious to introduce his beautiful wife to his own people. He remembered that he had left his dear mother in prison, and reproached himself for having forgotten her for so long. So he said to Roop, "Let us go, beloved, to my native city. My heart yearns after my dear ones there. I want to introduce you to them."

"My dear husband," replied Roop, "I will go with you wherever your heart lies. But we must not let my father guess we mean to go. He would forbid us to leave the country and set spies to watch our every movement. We will steal away secretly, riding together on my faithful Marut and taking with us only what we can carry."

"And my jewelled arrow," said the prince, "that I may give it back to my father and explain to him how I had lost it. Then shall I be restored to his favour, and maybe he will forgive my mother also."

"Have no fear," answered Roop. "All will surely go well with us. Now that new powers have been given to me, we can use them to save us from my father. I am sure we can also use them to rescue your revered mother."

Before dawn broke on the next day, the two set forth unattended. Marut seemingly took pride in his double burden and bearing them along so swiftly that they had all but reached the bounds of the country under the dominion of Agni as the sun rose. Just as they thought they were safe from pursuit, they heard a loud rushing noise behind. Looking round, they saw Agni close upon them on his Arab steed, with sword uplifted in his hand.

“Fear not,” whispered Roop to her husband. “I will show you what I can do.” And waving her arms to and fro, as she muttered some strange words, she changed herself into an old woman and Sringabhujia into an old man, while Marut became a great pile of wood by the roadside.

When the angry father reached the spot, the bride and bridegroom were busily gathering sticks to add to the pile, seemingly too absorbed in their work to take any notice of the angry magician, who shouted out to them:

“Have you seen a man and a woman pass along this way?”

The old woman straightened herself, and peering, up into his face, said, “No, we are too busy over our work to notice anything else.” “And what are you doing in my wood?” asked Agni.

“We are helping to collect the fuel for the pyre of the great magician Agni,” answered Roop. “Don’t you know he died yesterday?” What surprised Agni, and in fact nearly took his breath away, was to be quietly told that he was dead. He began to think that he was dreaming, and said to himself, “I cannot really be dead without knowing it, so I must be asleep.” And he quietly turned his horse round and rode slowly home again. This was just what his daughter wanted; and as soon as he was out of sight, she turned herself, her husband and Marut into their natural forms again, laughing merrily at the thought of the ease with which she had got rid of her father.

21. Do you think it was clever of Roop to make up this story?

22. Do you think it is better to believe all that you are told or to be more ready to doubt when anything you hear seems to be unusual?



Once more, the bride and bridegroom set forth on their way, and once more they heard Agni coming after them. For when he got back to his palace, and the servants hastened out to take his horse, he guessed that a trick had been played on him. He did not even dismount, but just turned his horse’s head around and galloped back again.

“If ever,” he thought to himself, “I catch those two young people, I’ll make them wish they had obeyed me. Yes, they shall suffer for it. I am not going to stand being defied like this.” This time, Roop made her husband and Marut invisible, and she herself changed into a letter-carrier, hurrying along the road as if not a moment was to be lost. She took no notice of her father, till he reined up his steed and shouted to her, “Have you seen a man and woman on horseback pass by?”

“No, indeed,” she said, “I have a very important letter to deliver, and could think of nothing but making all the haste possible.” “And what is this important letter about?” asked Agni. “Can you tell me that?”

“Oh, yes, I can tell you that,” she said. “But where can you have been, not to have heard the terrible news about the ruler of this land?”

“You can’t tell me anything I don’t know about him,” answered the magician, “for he is my greatest friend.”

“Then you know that he is dying from a wound he got in a battle with his enemies only yesterday. I am to take this letter to his brother Dhuma, bidding him come to see him before the end.”

Again Agni wondered if he were dreaming, or if he were under some strange spell and did not really know who he was? Being able, as he was, to cast spells on other people, he was ready to fancy the same thing had befallen him. He said nothing when he heard that he was wounded, and was about to turn back again when Roop said to him, “As you are on horseback and can get to Dhuma’s temple quicker than I can, will you carry the message of his brother’s approaching death to him for me, and bid him make all possible haste if he would see him alive?”

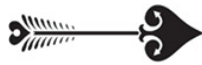
This was altogether too much for the magician, who became sure that there was something very wrong about him. He knew he was not wounded or dying, but he thought he must be ill of fever, fancying he heard what he did not. He stared fixedly at his daughter, and she stared up at him, half-afraid he might find out who she was, but he never guessed.

“Do your own errands,” he said at last, and slashing his poor innocent horse with his whip, he wheeled round and dashed home again as fast as he could. Again his servants ran out to receive him, and he gloomily dismounted, telling them to send his chief councillor to him in his private apartments. Shut up with him, he poured out all his troubles, and the councillor advised him to see his physician without any delay, for he felt sure that these strange fancies were caused by illness.

The doctor, when he came, was very much puzzled, but he looked as wise as he could, ordered perfect rest and all manner of disagreeable medicines. He was very much surprised at the change he noticed in his patient, who, instead of angrily declaring that there was nothing the matter with him, was evidently in a great fright about his health. He shut himself up for many days, and it was a long time before he got over the shock he had received, and then it was too late for him to go after the lovers.

23. *Can you explain what casting a spell means, metaphorically?*

24. *Can you give an instance of a spell being cast on any one you have heard of?*



Having got rid of Agni for good, Roop and her husband were very soon out of his reach and in the country belonging to Sringabhuja's father, who had bitterly mourned the loss of his favourite son. When the news was brought to him that two strangers, a handsome young man and a beautiful woman, who appeared to be husband and wife, had entered his capital, he hastened forth to meet them, hoping that perhaps they could give him news of Sringabhuja. What was his joy when he recognised his dear son, holding the jewelled arrow, which had led him into such trouble, in his right hand, as he guided Marut with his left! The king flung himself from his horse, and Sringabhuja, giving the reins to Roop, also dismounted. The next moment he was in his father's arms, everything forgotten and forgiven in the happy reunion.

Great was the rejoicing over Sringabhuja's return and hearty was the welcome given to his beautiful bride, who quickly won all hearts, but those of the wicked wives and sons who had tried to harm her husband and his mother. They feared the anger of the king, when he found out how they had deceived him, and they were right to fear.

Sringabhuja's very first act was to plead for his mother to be set free. He would not tell any of his adventures, he said, till she could hear them too. The king, full of remorse for the way he had treated her, went with him to the prison. Gunika's joy knew no bounds when the two entered the place in which she had shed so many tears! She could not at first believe her eyes or ears, but soon she realised that her sufferings were indeed over. She could not be quite happy till her beloved husband said he knew she had never loved anyone but him. She had been accused falsely, she said, and she wanted the woman who had told a lie about her to be made to own the truth.

This was done in the presence of the whole court, and when judgment had been passed upon Lekha, the brothers of Sringabhujā were also brought before their father, charged with having deceived the king. They too were condemned, and all the culprits would have been taken to prison and shut up for the rest of their lives, if those they had injured had not pleaded for their forgiveness. Gunika and her son prostrated themselves at the foot of the throne, and would not rise till they had won pardon for their enemies. Lekha and the brothers were allowed to go free. Sringabhujā was proclaimed heir to the crown after his father's death. His brothers, however, never ceased to hate him. When he came to the throne, they gave him a great deal of trouble. He had many years of happiness with his wife and parents before that, and never regretted the mistake about the jewelled arrow. How else could he have met his dear Roop!

25. *What is the chief lesson to be learnt from this story?*
26. *Do you think it was good for those who had told lies about Gunika and her son to be forgiven so easily?*
27. *Can you give any instances of good coming out of evil and of evil coming out of what seemed good?*
28. *Do you think Roop deserved all the happiness that came to her?*
29. *Was it fair on Roop's part to work against her own father?*

Can you find some words and names from the story in this word grid? There are more than 20. You can go across, down, diagonally, and even overlap.

Q	F	Y	U	O	D	K	S	K	V	E	N
M	T	M	D	V	H	Y	U	L	A	D	F
E	A	T	S	O	U	V	R	I	V	E	R
P	J	G	R	I	M	W	O	O	D	S	B
G	U	N	I	K	A	H	O	T	U	J	V
E	K	V	N	C	T	V	P	Y	R	E	W
M	F	J	G	R	I	F	E	A	A	W	J
S	P	V	A	C	R	A	N	E	G	E	R
E	J	A	B	V	W	G	N	J	I	L	C
S	N	R	H	X	J	N	E	W	N	L	R
M	A	R	U	T	R	I	J	D	G	E	A
A	K	O	J	U	D	C	I	D	K	D	W
R	V	W	A	G	V	H	E	J	F	S	I
T	V	S	I	H	R	E	V	R	K	I	D

The One With Magical Powers





A certain man named Hari lived in a little village in India, where there were no rich people and everyone had to work hard to get his daily food. He was not very happy with the life he led. He had a wife named Vidya, and a large family. He knew very well that even if he had been very industrious, it would have been difficult for him to get enough food for them all. To add to his woes, he was not a bit industrious. He was very lazy, and so was his wife. Neither of them made any attempt to teach their boys and girls to earn their own living. If the other poor people in the village had not helped them, they would have starved. Hari had this horrible habit of sending his children out in different directions to beg or steal, while he and Vidya stayed at home doing nothing.

One day he said to his wife, “Let us leave this stupid place and go to some big city where we can pick up a living of some kind. I will pretend to be a wise man, able to find out secrets. You can say that you know all about children, having had so many of your own.” Vidya gladly agreed to this, and the whole party set out, carrying the few possessions they had with them.

They came to a big town, and Hari went boldly to the chief house in it, leaving his wife and children outside. He asked to see the master, and was taken into his presence. This master was a very rich merchant, owning large estates in the country. But I am sure he was not very clever. I say this because he believed the story Hari told him. He said that he would find work for him and his wife, and that the children could be sent to a farm he had, in the country, where they could be made very useful.

Overjoyed at this, Hari ran out to tell his wife the good news. The two were quickly called into the grand residence, in which a small room was given to them for their own, while the children were taken away to the farm, full of eager delight at the change from the wretched life they had been leading.

- 1. Would it have been better for Hari and Vidya if their neighbours had not helped them?*
- 2. Do you think Hari was the only person to blame for his poverty?*



Soon after the arrival of the husband and wife at the merchant's house, a very important event took place - the marriage of the eldest daughter. Great were the preparations beforehand, in which Vidya took her full share, helping in the kitchen to make all manner of delicious dishes, and living in great luxury herself. For there was no stint in the wealthy home; even the humblest servants were well cared for. Vidya was happier than she had ever been before, now that she had plenty to do and plenty of good food. She became quite a different creature, and began to wish she had been a better mother to her children.

"When the wedding is over," she thought, "I will go and see how they are getting on." On the other hand, she forgot all about her husband and scarcely ever saw him.

It was all very different with Hari himself. He had no special duties to perform and nobody seemed to want him. If he went into the kitchen, the busy servants ordered him to get out of their way; and he was not made welcome by the owner of the house or his guests. The merchant too forgot all about him, and Hari felt very lonely and miserable. He had been thinking to himself how much he would enjoy all the delicious food he would get after the wedding; and now he began to grumble: "I'm starving in the midst of plenty, that's what I am. Something will have to be done to change this horrible state of things."

While the preparations for the wedding were going on, Vidya never came near her husband, and he lay awake a long time thinking, "What in the world can I do to make the master send for me?" All of a sudden an idea came into his head. "I'll steal something valuable, and hide it away; and when everyone is being asked about the loss, the merchant will remember the man who can reveal secrets. Now what can I take that is sure to be missed? I know, I know!" And springing out of bed, he hastily dressed himself and crept out of the house.

3. What would you have done if you had been Hari?

4. Do you think Vidya ever had any real love for her husband?



This was what Hari decided to do. The merchant had a great many very beautiful horses, which lived in splendid stables and were taken the greatest possible care of. Amongst them was a lovely little Arab mare, the special favourite of the bride, who often went to pet it and give it sugar.

“I’ll steal that mare and hide it away in the forest,” said the wicked man to himself. “Then, when everyone is hunting for her, the master will remember the man who can reveal secrets and send for me. Ah! What a clever fellow I am!” The stablemen and grooms were feasting in a corner. So he climbed in through a window that was always left open. It turned out that he was right. He met no one on his way to the stables, which were quite deserted. He got in easily, opened the door from inside, and led out the little mare, which made no resistance. The mare had always been so kindly treated that she was not a bit afraid. He took the beautiful creature far into the depths of the forest, tied her up there, and got safely back to his own room without being seen.

Early the next morning, the merchant’s daughter, attended by her maidens, went to see her dear little mare, taking with her an extra supply of sugar. How distressed she was when she found the stall empty! She guessed at once that a thief had got in during the night, and hurried home to tell her father, who was very, very angry with the stablemen who had deserted their posts, and declared they should all be flogged for it. “But the first thing to do is to get the mare back,” he said and he ordered messengers to be sent in every direction, promising a big reward to anyone who brought news of the mare.

Vidya, of course, heard all there was to hear, and at once suspected that Hari had something to do with the matter. “I expect he has hidden the mare,” she thought to herself, “and means to get the reward for finding it.” So she asked to see the master of the house, and when leave was granted to her, she said to him, “Why do you not send for my husband, the man who can reveal secrets, because of the wonderful power that has been given him of seeing what is hidden from others? Many a time has he surprised me.”

5. Do you think Vidya had any wish to help Hari for his own sake?

6. Is there anything you think she should have done before seeing the master?



On hearing what Vidya said, the merchant at once told her to go and fetch her husband. But to her surprise, Hari refused to go back with her.

“You can tell the master what you like,” he said, angrily. “You all forgot me entirely yesterday; and now when you want me to help you, you suddenly remember my existence. I am not going to be at your beck and call, or anyone else’s.”

Vidya entreated him to listen to reason, but it was no good. She had to go back and tell the merchant that he would not come. Instead of being made angry by this, however, the master surprised her by saying: “Your husband is right. I have treated him badly. Go and tell him I apologise, and will reward him well, if only he will come and help me.”

Back again went Vidya and this time she was more successful. But though Hari said he would go back with her, he was very sulky and would not answer any of her questions. She could not understand him, and wished she had not left him to himself for so long. He behaved very strangely when the master, who received him very kindly, asked him if he could tell him where the mare was. “I know,” he said, “what a wise and clever man you are.”

“It didn’t seem much like it yesterday,” grumbled Hari. “Nobody took any notice of me then, but now that you want something of me, you find out that I am wise and clever. I am just the same person that I was yesterday.”

“I know, I know,” said the merchant, “and I apologise for my neglect. But when a man’s daughter is going to be married, it’s no wonder someone gets neglected.”

7. Do you think Hari was wise to treat his wife and the merchant as he did?

8. If the mare had been found while Hari was talking to the master, what effect do you think the discovery would have had upon them both?



Hari now thought it was time to take a different tone. So he put his hand in his pocket, and brought out a map he had got ready whilst waiting to be sent for, as he had felt sure he would be. He spread it out before the merchant, and pointed to a dark spot in the midst of many lines crossing each other in a bewildering manner, which he explained were pathways through the forest. “Under a tree, where that dark spot is, you will find the mare,” he said.

Overjoyed at the good news, the merchant at once sent a trusted servant to test the truth. When the mare was brought back, nothing seemed too good for the man who had led to her recovery. At the wedding festivities, Hari was treated as an honoured guest, and no longer had he any need to complain of not having food enough. His wife of course thought he would forgive her now for having neglected him. But not a bit of it. He still sulked with her, and she could never feel quite sure what the truth was about the mare.

All went well with Hari for a long time. But then, something happened which seemed likely to get him into very great trouble. A quantity of gold and many valuable jewels disappeared in the palace of the king of the country, and when the thief could not be discovered, someone told the king the story of the stolen mare, and how a man called Hari, living in the house of a rich merchant in the chief city, had found her when everyone else had failed.

“Fetch that man at once,” ordered the king.

Very soon, Hari was brought before him. “I hear you are so wise, you can reveal all secrets,” said the king. “Now tell me immediately who has stolen the gold and jewels and where they are to be found.”

Poor Hari did not know what to say or do. “Give me till tomorrow,” he replied in a faltering voice. “I must have a little time to think.”

“I will not give you a single hour,” answered the king. For seeing the man before him was frightened, he began to suspect he was a deceiver. “If you do not at once tell me where the gold and jewels are, I will have you flogged until you find your tongue.”

Hearing this, Hari was more terrified than ever. He knew that his only chance of gaining time was to make up some story and get the king to believe in him. So he drew himself up and answered, “The wisest magicians need to employ means to find out the truth. Give me twenty-four hours, and I will name the thieves.”

“You are not much of a magician if you cannot find out such a simple thing as I ask of you,” said the king. And turning to the guards, he ordered them to take Hari to prison, and shut him there without food or drink till he came to his senses. The man was dragged away, and very soon, he found himself alone in a dark and gloomy room from which he saw no hope of escape.

He was in despair and walked up and down, trying in vain to think of some way of escape. “I shall die here of starvation, unless my wife finds

some means of setting me free,” he said. “I wish I had treated her better instead of being so sulky with her.” He tried the bars of the window, but they were very strong; he could not hope to move them to escape. And he beat against the door, but no notice was taken of that.

9. *What lesson does the trouble Hari was in teach you?*

10. *Do you think it would have been better for him to tell the king he could not reveal secrets?*



When it got quite dark in the prison, Hari began to talk to himself aloud. “Oh,” he said, “I wish I had bitten my tongue out before I told that lie about the mare. It is all my foolish tongue which has got me into this trouble. Tongue! Tongue!” he went on, “it is all your fault.”

Now a very strange thing happened. The money and jewels had been stolen by a man who had been told where they were by a young servant girl in the palace, whose name was Jihva, which is the Sanskrit word for tongue. This girl was in a great fright when she heard that a revealer of secrets had been taken before the king. “He will tell of my share in the matter,” she thought, “and I shall get into trouble.” It so happened that the guard at the prison door was fond of her, as well as the thief who had stolen the money and jewels. So when all was quiet in the palace, Jihva slipped away to see if she could get that guard to let her see the prisoner.

“If I promise to give him part of the money,” she thought, “he will not betray me.”

The guard was glad enough when Jihva came to talk to him, and he let her listen at the keyhole to what Hari was saying. Just imagine her astonishment when she heard him repeating her name again and again. “Jihva! Jihva! You...” he cried, “... you are the cause of this suffering. Why did you behave in such a foolish manner, just for the sake of the good things of this life? Never can I forgive you, Jihva. You wicked, wicked one!” “Oh, oh!” cried Jihva in an agony of terror. “He knows the truth; he knows that I helped the thief.” And she entreated the guard to let her into the prison that she might plead with Hari. The guard hesitated at first, but in the end she persuaded him to consent by promising him a large reward.

When the key grated in the lock, Hari stopped talking aloud, wondering whether what he had been saying had been overheard by the guard, and half hoping that his wife had got leave to come and see him. As the door opened and he saw a woman coming in by the light of a lantern held up by the guard, he cried, "Vidya, my beloved!" But he soon realized that it was a stranger. He was indeed surprised and relieved, when Jihva suddenly threw herself at his feet and, clinging to his knees, began to weep and moan "Oh, most holy man," she cried between her sobs, "who knows the very secrets of the heart, I have come to confess that it was indeed I, Jihva, your humble servant, who aided the thief to take the jewels and the gold and to hide them beneath the big pomegranate tree behind the palace."

"Rise," replied Hari, overjoyed at hearing this. "You have told me nothing that I did not know, for no secret is hidden from me. What reward will you give me if I save you from the wrath of the king?"

"I will give you all the money I have," said Jihva, "and that is not a little."

"That also I knew," said Hari. "For you have good wages, and many a time you have stolen money that did not belong to you. Go now and fetch it all, and have no fear that I will betray you."

11. What mistake do you think Jihva made in what she said to Hari?

12. What would have been the best thing for her to do when she thought she was found out?



Without waiting a moment, Jihva hurried away to fetch the money. But when she got back with it, the man on guard, who had heard everything that had passed between her and Hari, would not let her into the prison again till she gave him ten gold pieces. Thinking that Hari really knew exactly how much money she had, Jihva was afraid he would be angry when he missed some of it, and again she let out the truth, which he might never have guessed. For she began at once to say, "I brought all I had, but the man at the door has taken ten pieces." This did vex Hari very much, and he told her he would let the king know what she had done, unless she fetched the thief who had taken the money and jewels.

"I cannot do that," said Jihva, "for he is very far away. He lives with his brother, Indra Datta, in the forest beyond the river, more than a day's journey

from here.”

“I did but try you,” said the clever Hari, who now knew who the thief was, “for I can see where he is at this moment. Now go home and wait there till I send for you.”

But Jihva, who loved the thief and did not want him to be punished, refused to go until Hari promised that he would not tell the king who the man was or where he lived. “I would rather,” she said, “bear all the punishment than see him suffer.” Even Hari was touched at this, and fearing that if he kept Jihva longer, she would be found in the prison by messengers from the king, he promised that no harm should come to her or the thief, and let her go.

Very soon after this, messengers came to take Hari once more before the king, who received him very coldly and began at once to threaten him with a terrible punishment, if he did not say who the thief was, and where the gold and jewels were. Even now Hari pretended to be unwilling to speak. But when he saw that the king would put up with no more delay, he said, “I will lead you to the spot where the treasure is buried, but the name of the thief, though I know it, I will never betray.”

The king did not really care much who the thief was, so long as he got back his money, lost not a moment, but ordered his attendants to get spades and follow him. Very soon Hari brought them to the pomegranate tree. And there, sure enough, deep down in the ground, was all that had been lost.

The king was greatly delighted, and heaped riches and honours upon him. But some of the wise men at the court suspected that he was really a deceiver, and set about trying to find out all they could about him. They sent for the man who had been on guard at the prison, and asked him many questions. He did not dare tell the truth, for he knew he would be terribly punished if he let out that Jihva had been allowed to see his prisoner; but he hesitated so much that the wise men knew he was not speaking the truth.

One of the wise men, whom the king loved, and trusted very much, whose name was Devgyaani, said to his master, “I do not like to see that man, about whom we really know nothing, treated as he is. He might easily have found out where the treasure was hidden without any special power. Will you not test him in some other way in my presence and that of your chief advisers?”

The king, who was always ready to listen to reason, agreed to this; and after a long consultation with Devgyaani, he decided on a very clever puzzle with which to try Hari. A live frog was put into a pitcher, the lid was shut

down, and the man who pretended to know everything was brought into the great reception room, where all the wise men of the court were gathered together around the throne. Devgyaani had been chosen by his master to speak for him, and coming forward, he pointed to the small pitcher on the ground, and said: "Great as are the honours already bestowed on you, they shall be increased if you can say at once what is in that pitcher."

13. What kind of man do you think the king was from his behaviour to Hari?

14. Was it wise or foolish of Hari to remain in the city after his very narrow escape?



Hari thought when he looked at the pitcher, 'Alas, alas, it is all over for me now! Never can I find out what is in it. Wish that I had left this town with the money I had from Jihva before it was too late!' Then he began to mutter to himself, as it was always his habit to do when he was in trouble. It so happened that when he was a little boy, his father used to call him frog, and now his thoughts went back to the time when he was a happy innocent child, and he said aloud "Oh, frog, what trouble has come to you! That pitcher will be the death of you!"

Even Devgyaani was astonished when he heard that, and so were all the other wise men. The king was delighted to find that he had made no mistake. Moreover, all the people who had been allowed to come in to see the trial were greatly excited. Shouting for joy, the king called Hari to come to the foot of the throne, and told him he would never, ever doubt him again. He should have yet more money, a beautiful house in the country along with the one he already had in the town, and his children should be brought from the farm to live with him and their mother, who should have lovely dresses and ornaments to wear.

Nobody was more surprised than Hari himself. He guessed, of course, that there was a frog in the pitcher. And when the king had ended his speech, he said, "One thing I ask in addition to all that has been given me, that I may be allowed to keep the pitcher in memory of this day, when my truth has been proved once more beyond a doubt."

His request was granted, and he went off with the pitcher under his arm, full of rejoicing over his narrow escape. He was also full of fear for the

future. He knew only too well that it had only been by a lucky chance that he had used the word 'Jihva' in his first danger and 'frog' in the second. He was not likely to get off a third time, so he made up his mind that he would skip away some dark night soon. With all the money and jewels he could carry, he made sure he would leave the place as soon as he got a chance. He did not even tell his wife what he meant to do, but pretended to have forgiven her for the way she had neglected him when he was poor, and to be glad that their children were to be restored to them.

But before the children came from the farm, their father had disappeared, and nobody ever found out what had become of him. The king let his family keep what had been given to him, and to the end believed he really had been what he had pretended to be. Only Devgyaani had his doubts, but he kept them to himself, for he thought, "Now the man is gone, it really does not matter who or what he was."

15. What is the chief lesson to be learnt from this story?

16. What do you think it was that made Hari think of his boyhood when he was in trouble?

17. Do you think he took the pitcher and the frog with him when he left the city?

18. Do you think there was anything good in the character of Hari?

Did you know?

Free-hand doodling into a certain shape, using some patterns or tangles is called 'Zentangle'. It is often suggested as a meditative therapy. Why don't you try colouring the following Zentangle? You can also make one on your own.



When the Hermit's Daughter Became Queen





Somewhere near a small town called Ikshumati lived a holy man named Shravan. A beautiful river flowed there, and the countless trees alongside made the place look like heaven. Shravan spent a great part of his life praying to god. He had lost his wife when his only child, a lovely girl called Kalika, was only a few months old. Kalika was a very happy girl, with many friends in the woods around her home. Her friends were not children like herself, but wild creatures, who knew she would not do them any harm. They loved her and she loved them. The birds were so tame that they would eat out of her hand, and the deer used to follow her about in the hope of getting the bread she carried in her pocket for them. Her father taught her all that he could, and that was a great deal. She could read quite a few learned books in the ancient language of her native land. But better than what she found in those books was what Shravan told her - about the loving god of all gods who rules the world.

Kalika also learnt a great deal through her friendship with wild animals. She knew where the birds built their nests, where the baby deer were born, where the squirrels hid their nuts, and what food all the dwellers in the forest liked best. She helped her father to work in their garden in which all their own food was grown; and she loved to cook the fruit and vegetables for Shravan and herself. Her clothes were made of the bark of the trees in the forest, which she herself wove into thin soft material suitable for wearing in a hot climate.

1. *What do you think made the animals trust Kalika?*
2. *Could you have been happy in the forest with no other children to play with?*



Kalika never even thought about other children, because she had not been used to having them with her. She was just as happy as the day was long, and

never wished for any change. But when she was about sixteen, something happened which quite altered her whole life. One day her father had gone into the forest to cut wood, and had left her alone. She had finished tidying the house, and got everything ready for the midday meal, and was sitting at the door of her home, reading to herself, with birds fluttering about her head and a pet doe lying beside her, when she heard the noise of a horse's feet approaching. She looked up, and there on the other side of the fence was a very handsome young man seated on a great black horse, which he had reined up when he caught sight of her. He looked at her without speaking, and she looked back at him with her big black eyes full of surprise at his sudden appearance. She made a beautiful picture, with the green creepers covering the hut behind her, and the doe, which had started up in fear of the horse, pressing against her.

The man was the king of the country, whose name was Indra. He had been hunting and had got separated from his attendants. He was very surprised to find someone living in the very depths of the forest, and was going to ask the young girl who she was, when Kalika saw her father coming along the path leading to his home. Jumping up, she ran to meet him, glad that he had come. Since she had never before seen a young man, she was as shy as any of the wild creatures of the woods. Now that Shravan was with her, she got over her fright, and felt quite safe, clinging to his arm as he and the king talked together.

3. *Can you describe just how Kalika felt when she saw the king?*
4. *Do you think it would have been a good or a bad thing for her to live all the rest of her life in the forest?*



Shravan knew at once that the man on the horse was the king, and a great fear entered his heart when he saw how Indra looked at his beloved child.

“Who are you, and who is that lovely girl?” asked the king.

And Shravan answered, “I am only a humble woodcutter; and this is my only child, whose mother has long been dead.”

“Her mother must have been a very lovely woman, if her daughter is like her,” said the king. “Never before have I seen such perfect beauty.” “Her

mother,” replied Shravan, “was indeed what you say; and her soul was as beautiful as the body in which it dwelt.”

“I would have your daughter for my wife,” said the king, “and if you will give her to me, she shall have no wish ungratified. She shall have servants to wait on her and other young girls to be her companions; beautiful clothes to wear, the best of food to eat, horses and carriages as many as she will, and no work to do with her own hands.”

5. If you had been Kalika, what would you have said when you heard all these promises?

6. Of all the things the king said she would have, which would you have liked best?



What Kalika did was to cling closely to her father, hiding her face on his arm and whispering, “I will not leave you. Do not send me away from you, dear father.”

Shravan stroked her hair, and said in a gentle voice, “But, dear child, your father is old, and must leave you soon. It is a great honour for his little girl to be chosen by the king for his bride. Do not be afraid, but look at him and see how handsome he is and how kind he looks.”

Then Kalika looked at the king, who smiled at her and looked so charming that her fear began to leave her. She still clung to her father, but no longer hid her face, and Shravan begged the king to let Kalika go inside, so that he might talk with the king alone. The king consented to this, and Kalika gladly ran away. But when she reached the door of her home, she looked back, and knew in her heart that she already loved the king and did not want him to go away.

It did not take long for the matter of the marriage to be settled. For Shravan, sad though he was to lose his dear only child, was glad that she should be a queen, and have someone to take care of her when he was gone. After this first visit to the little house in the forest, the king came every day to see Kalika, bringing all kinds of presents for her. She learnt to love him so much that she became as eager as he was for the wedding. When the day was fixed, the king sent several ladies of his court to dress the bride in clothes

more beautiful that she had ever dreamt of. In them, she looked lovelier than the first day her lover had seen her.

Now amongst these ladies was a very wise woman who could see what was going to happen; and she knew that there would be troubles for the young queen in the palace, because many would be jealous of her happiness. She was very impressed with the beautiful innocent girl, and wanted to help her so much that she managed to get her alone for a few minutes, when she said to her, “I want you to promise me something. It is to take this packet of mustard seeds, hide it in the bosom of your dress, and when you ride to the palace with your husband, strew the seed along the path as you go. You know how quickly mustard grows. Well, it will spring up soon, and if you want to come home again, you can easily find the way by following the green shoots. Alas, I fear they will not have time to wither before you need their help!”

Kalika laughed when the wise woman talked about trouble coming to her. She was so happy, she could not believe she would want to come home again so soon. “My father can come to me when I want him,” she said. “I need only tell my dear husband to send for him.” But for all that, she still took the packet of seeds and hid it in her dress.

7. *Would you have done as the wise woman told you if you had been the bride?*

8. *Ought Kalika to have told the king about the mustard seeds?*



After the wedding was over, the king mounted his beautiful horse, and bending down, took his young wife up before him. Holding her close to him with his right arm, he held the reins in his left hand. Away they went, leaving all the attendants far behind them, the queen scattering the mustard seeds as she had promised to do. When they arrived at the palace, there were great rejoicings, and everybody seemed charmed with the queen, who was full of eager interest in all that she saw.

For several weeks, there was nobody in the wide world so happy and light-hearted as the bride. The king spent many hours a day with her, and was never tired of listening to all she had to tell him about her life in the

forest with her father. Every day he gave her some fresh proof of his love, and he never refused to do anything she asked him to do. But presently a change came. Amongst the ladies of the court there was a beautiful woman, who had hoped to be queen herself, and hated Kalika so much that she made up her mind to get her into disgrace with the king. She asked some powerful people to help her, one after the other. But everybody loved the queen, and dare not plot against the king's beloved. The wicked woman began to be afraid that those she had told about her wish to harm the queen would warn the king. So she went looking for someone who did not know Kalika, and suddenly remembered a wise woman named Mala who lived in a cave not far from the town. Many people used to go to her for advice in their difficult times. She went to this woman one night, and told her a long story in which there was not one word of truth. The young queen, she said, did not really love the king, and with the help of her father, who was a magician, she meant to poison him. How could this terrible thing be prevented, she asked. She promised that if only Mala would help to save Indra, she would give her a great deal of money.

Mala guessed at once that the story was not true. That it was only because the woman was jealous of the beautiful young queen that she wished to hurt her. But she loved money very much. Instead of refusing to have anything to do with the matter, she said, "Bring me fifty gold pieces now, and promise me another fifty when the queen is sent away from the palace, and I will tell you what to do."

The wicked woman promised all this at once. The very next night, she brought the first fifty pieces of gold to the cave, and Mala told her that she must get the barber, who saw the king alone every day, to tell him he had found out a secret about the queen. "You must tell the barber all you have already told me. But be very careful to give some proof of your story. For if you do not do so, you will only have wasted the fifty gold pieces you have already given to me. More than that, you will be terribly punished for trying to hurt the queen, who everybody loves."

9. Do you think this plot against Kalika was likely to succeed?

10. Can you think of any way in which the wise woman might have helped the queen and also have gained a reward for herself?



The wicked woman went back to the palace, thinking all the way to herself, “How can I get a proof of what is not true?” At last an idea came into her head. She knew that the queen loved to wander in the forest, and that she was not afraid of the wild creatures, but seemed to understand their language. She would tell the barber that Kalika was a witch and knew the secrets of the woods; that she had been seen gathering wild herbs, some of them poisonous, and had been heard muttering strange words to herself as she did so.

Early the next morning, the cruel woman went to see the barber, and promised him a reward if he would tell the king what she had found out about his wife. “He won’t believe you at first,” she said, “but you must go on telling him till he does. You are clever enough,” she added, “to make up something he will believe if what I have thought of is no good.”

The barber, who had served the king for many years, would not at first agree to help to make him unhappy. But he too liked money very much, and in the end he promised to see what he could do if he was well paid for it. He was, as the wicked woman had said, clever enough; and he knew from long experience just how to talk to his master. He began by asking the king if he had heard of the lovely woman who was sometimes seen by the woodmen wandering about alone in the forest, with wild creatures following her. Remembering how he had first seen Kalki, Indra at once guessed that she was the lovely woman. But he did not tell the barber so; for he was so proud of his dear wife’s beauty that he liked to hear her praised, and wanted the man to go on talking about her. He just said: “What is she like? Is she tall or short, fair or dark?” The barber answered the questions readily. Then he went on to say that it was easy to see that the lady was as clever as she was beautiful, for she knew not only all about animals, but also about plants. “Every day,” he said, “she gathers quantities of herbs, and I have been told she makes healing medicines of them. Some even go so far as to say she also makes poisons. But, for my part, I do not believe that; she is too beautiful to be wicked.”

The king listened, and a tiny little doubt crept into his mind about his wife. She had never told him about the herbs she gathered, although she

often chattered about her friends in the forest. Perhaps it was not Kalika the barber was talking about. He would ask her if she knew anything about making medicines from herbs.

He did so when they were alone together, and she said at once, “Oh, yes! My father taught me. But I have never made any since I was married.” “Are you sure?” asked the king.

She answered laughing, “Of course, I am. How could I be anything but sure? I have no need to think of medicine-making. Now I am the queen.”

Indra said no more at the time. But he was troubled, and when the barber came again, he began at once to ask about the woman who had been seen in the woods. The wicked man was delighted, and made up a long story. He said one of the waiting women had told him of what she had seen. The woman, he said, had followed the lady home one day, and that home was not far from the palace. She had seen her bending over a fire above which hung a great sauce-pan full of water, into which she flung some of the herbs she had gathered, singing as she did so, in a strange language.

“Could it possibly be,” thought the king, “that Kalika had deceived him? Was she perhaps a witch after all?” He remembered that he really did not know who she was, or who her father was. He had loved her directly as he saw her, just because she was so beautiful. What was he to do now? He was quite sure from the description the barber had given of the woman in the forest, that it was his wife. He would watch her himself in future, and say nothing to her that would make her think he was doing so.

11. What should the king have done when he heard the barber’s story?

12. Can you really love anybody truly whom you do not trust?



Although the king said nothing to his wife about what the barber had told him, he could not treat her exactly as he did before he heard all that. Very soon, she began to wonder what she had done to vex him. The first thing she noticed was that one of the ladies of the court always followed her when she went into the forest. She did not like this; because she so dearly loved to be alone with the wild creatures, and they did not come to her when anyone else was near. She told the lady to go away, and she pretended to do so; but she

only kept a little further off. And though the queen could no longer see her, she knew she was there, and so did the birds and the deer. This went on for a little time, and then Kalika asked her husband to tell everyone that she was not to be disturbed when she went to see her friends in the forest.

“I am afraid,” said the king, “that some harm will come to you. There are wild beasts in the depths of the wood that might hurt you. And what should I do if any harm came to my dear one?”

Kalika was grieved when Indra said this, for she knew it was not true. She looked at him so sadly that he felt ashamed of having doubted her. All would perhaps have been well even now, if he had told her of the story he had heard about her, because then she could have proved that it was not true. But he did not do that. He only said, “I cannot let you be alone so far from home. Why not be content with the lovely gardens all round the palace? If you still wish to go to the woods, I will send one of the game-keepers with you instead of the lady who has been watching you. Then he can protect you if any harmful creature should approach.”

“If my lord does not wish me to be alone in the forest,” answered the queen, “I will be content with the gardens. For no birds or animals would come near me if one of their enemies were with me. But,” she added, as her eyes filled with tears, “will not my lord tell me why he no longer trusts his wife, who loves him with all her heart?”

The king was very much touched by what Kalika said, but still could not make up his mind to tell her the truth. So he only embraced her fondly, and said she was a good little wife to be so ready to obey him. The queen went away very sadly, wondering to herself what she could do to prove to her dear lord that she loved him as much as ever. She took care never to go outside the palace gardens, but she longed very much for her old freedom, and began to grow pale and thin.

The wicked woman who had tried to do her harm was very much disappointed that she had only succeeded in making her unhappy. She went again to Mala, and promised her more money if she would think of some plan to get the king to send his wife away. The wise woman considered a long time, and then she said, “You must use the barber again. He goes from house to house, and he must tell the king that the beautiful woman, who used to roam about in the forest collecting herbs, has been seen there again in the dead of the night, when she could be sure no one would find out what she was doing.”

Now it so happened that Kalika was often unable to sleep because of her grief that the king did not love her so much as he used to do. One night she got so tired of lying awake that she got up very quietly, so as not to disturb her husband, and went out into the gardens, hoping that the fresh air might help her to sleep. The king too woke up, and finding that his wife was no longer beside him, he became very uneasy, and was about to go and seek her, when she came back. He asked her where she had been; and she told him exactly what had happened, but she did not explain why she could not sleep.

13. What mistake did the queen make in her treatment of the king?

14. Do you think it is more hurtful to yourself and to others to talk too much or too little?



When the barber was shaving the king the next morning, he told him he had heard that people were saying the beautiful woman had been seen again one night, gathering herbs and muttering to herself.

“They talk, my lord,” said the man, “of your own name having been on her lips. Those who love and honour you are anxious for your safety. Maybe the woman is indeed a witch, who for some reason of her own will try to poison you.”

Now Indra remembered that Kalika had left him the night before, “and perhaps,” he thought, “at other times when I was asleep.” He could scarcely wait until the barber had finished shaving him, so eager was he to find out the truth. He hurried to his wife’s private room, but she was not there. The attendant ladies told him she had not been seen by them that day. This troubled him terribly, and he roused the whole palace to seek her. Messengers were soon hurrying to and fro, but not a trace of her could be found. Indra was now quite sure that the woman the barber had talked about was Kalika, the wife he had so loved and trusted. “Perhaps,” he thought, “she has left poison in my food, and has gone away so as not to see me die.” He would neither eat nor drink, and he ordered all the ladies whose duty it was to wait on the queen to be locked up till she was found. Among them was the wicked woman too, who now wished she had never tried to harm her.

15. Where do you suppose the queen had gone?

16. What mistake did the king make when he heard the queen was missing?



In her trouble about the loss of the king's love, Kalika longed for her father, for she felt sure he would be able to help her. So she determined to go to him. With the aid of the wise woman who had given her the packet of mustard seeds, she disguised herself as a messenger, and mounted on a strong little pony, sped along the path marked out by the young shoots of mustard, reaching her old home in the forest before the night fell. Great indeed was the joy of Shravan at the sight of his beloved child, and very soon she had poured out all her sorrow to him.

The hermit was at first very much enraged with his son-in-law for the way in which he had treated Kalki, and declared that he would use all the powers he had to punish him.

"Never," he said, "shall he see your dear face again. I will go to him and call down on him all manner of misfortunes. You know not, dear child, I have never wished you to know, that I am a magician and can make the very beasts of the field and the winds of heaven obey me. I know full well who has made this mischief between you and your husband, and I will see that punishment overtakes them."

"No, no, father," cried Kalki. "I will not have any harm done to my dear one, for I love him with all my heart. All I ask of you is to prove to him that I am innocent of whatever fault he thinks I have committed, and to make him love and trust me again."

It was hard work to persuade Shravan to not harm the king, but he yielded in the end. Together, the father and daughter rode back to the palace, and together they were brought before Indra, who, in spite of the anger he had felt against his wife, was overjoyed to see her. When he looked at her clinging to Shravan's arm, as she had done the first time they met, all his old love returned, and he would have taken her in his arms and told her so before the whole court, if she had not drawn back.

It was Shravan who was the first to speak. Drawing himself up to his full height, and pointing to the king, he charged him with having broken his vow

to love and protect his wife. “You have listened to lying tongues,” he said, “and I will tell you to whom those tongues belong, that justice may be done to them.”

Once more Kalika interfered, “No, father,” she said. “Let their names be forgotten. Only prove to my lord that I am his loving faithful wife, and I will be content.”

“I need no proof,” cried Indra, “but lest others should follow their evil example, I will have vengeance on the slanderers. Name them, and their doom shall indeed be a terrible one.” Then Shravan told the king the whole sad story. When it was ended, the wicked woman who had first thought of injuring the queen, and the barber who had helped her, were sent for to hear their doom, which was to be shut up for the rest of their lives in prison. This was changed to two years only, because Kalika was generous enough to plead for them. As for the third person in the plot, the old witch of the cave, not a word was said about her by anybody. Shravan knew well enough what her share in the matter had been, but magicians and witches are careful not to make enemies of each other, and so he held his peace.

Indra was so grateful to his father-in-law for bringing his wife back to him that he wanted him to stop at the court, and said he would give him a very high position there. But Shravan refused every reward, declaring that he loved his little home in the forest better than the grand rooms he might have had in the palace.

“All I wish for,” he said, “is my dear child’s happiness. I hope you will never again listen to stories against your wife. If you do, you may be very sure that I shall hear of it. Next time I know that you have been unkind to her, I will punish you as you deserve.”

The king was obliged to let Shravan go, but after this he took Kalika to see her father in the forest very often. Later, when the queen had some children of her own, their greatest treat was to go to the little home, in the depths of the wood. They too learnt to love animals, and had a great many pets, but none of those pets were kept in cages.

17. What is the chief lesson to be learnt from this story?

18. Which of all the people in this tale do you like best?

19. What do you think is the greatest power in all the world?

20. If you had been Kalika, would you have forgiven those who tried to do you harm?



Table of Contents

[Why Indian Fairy Tales - An Introduction](#)

[The Woodcutter and the Fairies](#)

[The Mystery of the Missing Treasure](#)

[The Young King and the Magical Gifts](#)

[Adventures with the Jewelled Arrow](#)

[The One With Magical Powers](#)

[When the Hermit's Daughter Became Queen](#)